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THE

WORKS

OF

HANNAH MORE.

VOL. X.

ESSAY ON ST. PAUL.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

THE

WORKS

OF

HANNAH MORE.

A NEW EDITION,

WITH ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS,

IN ELEVEN VOLUMES.

VOL. X.

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AN ESSAY

ON THE

CHARACTER AND PRACTICAL WRITINGS

OF

SAINT PAUL.

Saint Paul hath furnished us with so rich a variety of moral and spiritual precepts, subordinate to the general laws of piety and virtue, that out of them might well be compiled a body of Ethics, or system of precepts *de officiis*, in truth and completeness far excelling those which any philosophy hath been able to devise or deliver. DR. BARROW.

PREFACE.

It is with no little diffidence that the Writer of the following pages ventures to submit them to the public eye. She comes "in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling." She is fully aware that whoever pretends to institute an enquiry into the character, and especially into the Writings, of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in a manner at all adequate to the dignity and excellence of both, should possess many and high requisites to which she can make out no fair title. It would, however, be entirely superfluous to insist on her incompetency to the proper execution of such a work, on her deficiencies in ancient learning, Biblical criticism, and deep theological knowledge; because the sagacity of the reader would not fail to be beforehand with her avowal in detecting them. It may, however, serve as some apology for the boldness of the present undertaking, that these little volumes are not of a critical but of a practical nature.

On the doctrinal portion, more especially, of Saint Paul's Epistles, such a multitude of admirable discourses have been composed, that to have attempted to add to their number without

reaching their excellence, would have been as unnecessary as it might have been presumptuous. On the practical part also, much has been ably and usefully written, dissertations, commentaries, treatises, and sermons, however, though of superior merit, have not worn out the subject; and elucidations of his writings, whether they relate to doctrine or to practice, cannot, in any point of view, be undertaken without exhibiting new proofs of those inestimable treasures they contain. They are a golden mine, in which the diligent workman, the deeper he digs, the more he will discover; the farther he examines, the more he will find. Rich veins, hitherto unheeded, will overpay his labours, will continue to pour out upon him their fresh abundance of precious ore. Even the present explorer, who had no skill to penetrate his depths, has been sometimes surprised at the opulence which lay upon the surface, and of which she had not before, perhaps, fully estimated the value.

There are, it is true, passages in the works of this great Apostle, (but they are of rare occurence, and bear no proportion to such as are obvious,) which have been interpreted in a different and even contradictory manner by men, who, agreeing in the grand essentials of Christianity, may be allowed to differ on a few abstruse points, without any impeachment of the piety on either side. If one must be mistaken, both may be sincere. If either be wrong, both doubtless desire to be right; and, happily for mankind, we shall all be ultimately tried by a Judge, who is a searcher of the

thoughts and intents of the *heart;* in whose sight the reciprocal exercise of Christian charity may be more acceptable than that entire uniformity of sentiment which would supersede the occasion of its exercise. "What I know not, teach Thou me," is a petition which even the wisest are not too wise to offer; and they who have preferred it with the most effect are, of all others, the persons who will judge the most tenderly of the different views, or unintentional misconceptions, of the opposite party.

That conquest in debate over a Christian adversary, which is achieved at the expense of the Christian temper, will always be dearly purchased; and though a triumph so obtained may discomfit the opponent, it will afford no moral triumph to the conqueror.

Waving, therefore, both from disinclination and inability, whatever passages may be considered as controversial, the Writer has confined herself to endeavour, though it must be confessed, imperfectly and superficially, to bring forward Saint Paul's character as a model for our general imitation, and his practical writings as a storehouse for our general instruction, avoiding whatever might be considered as a ground for the discussion of any point not immediately tending to practical utility.

It may be objected to her plan, that it is not reasonable to propose for general imitation a character so highly gifted, so peculiarly circumstanced, — an inspired Apostle, — a devoted Martyr. But it is the principal design of these pages, —

a design which it may be thought is too frequently avowed in them, — to show that our common actions are to be performed, and our common trials sustained, in somewhat of the same spirit and temper with those high duties and those unparalleled sufferings to which Saint Paul was called out; and that every Christian, in his measure and degree, should exhibit somewhat of the dispositions inculcated by that religion of which the Apostle Paul was the brightest human example, as well as the most illustrious human teacher.

The Writer is persuaded that many read the Epistles of Saint Paul with deep reverence for the station they hold in the Inspired Oracles, without considering that they are at the same time supremely excellent for their unequalled applicableness to life and manners; that many, while they highly respect the Writer, think him too high for ordinary use. It has, therefore, been her particular object in the present Work, not, indeed, to diminish the dignity of the Apostle, but to diminish, in one sense, the distance at which we are apt to hold so exalted a model; to draw him into a more intimate connection with ourselves; to let him down, as it were, not to our level, but to our familiarity. To induce us to resort to him, not only on the great demands and trying occurrences of life, but to bring both the writings and the conduct of this distinguished Saint to mix with our common concerns, to incorporate the doctrines which he teaches, the principles which he exhibits, and the precepts which he enjoins, into our ordi-

nary habits, into our every-day practice; to consider him not only as the Writer who has the most ably and successfully unfolded the sublime truths of our Divine religion, and as the Instructor who has supplied us with the noblest system of the higher ethics, but who has even condescended to extend his code to the more minute exigencies and relations of familiar life.

It will, perhaps, be objected to the Writer of these pages, that she has shown too little method in her distribution of the parts of her subject, and too little system in her arrangement of the whole; that she has expatiated too largely on some points, passed over others too slightly, and left many unnoticed; that she has exhibited no history of the life, and observed no regular order in her reference to the actions, of the Apostle. She can return no answer to these anticipated charges, but that, as she never aspired to the dignity of an Expositor, so she never meant to enter into the details of the Biographer.

Formed as they are upon the most extensive views of the nature of man, it is no wonder that the Writings of Saint Paul have been read with the same degree of interest by Christians of every name, age, and nation: the principles they contain are, in good truth, absolute and universal; and whilst this circumstance renders them of general obligation, it enables us, even in the remotest generation, to judge of the skilfulness of his addresses to the understanding, and to feel the aptitude of his appeals to the heart.

To the candour of the reader, — a candour which, though, perhaps, she has too frequently tried, and too long solicited, she has, however, never yet failed to experience, — she commits this little Work. If it should set one human being on the consideration of objects hitherto neglected, she will account that single circumstance success; — nay, she will be reconciled even to failure, if that failure should stimulate some more enlightened mind, some more powerful pen, to supply, in a future work on the same subject, the deficiencies of which she has been guilty, to rectify the errors which she may have committed, to rescue the cause which she may have injured.

Barley Wood,
January 20. 1815.

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AN ESSAY

ON THE

CHARACTER AND PRACTICAL WRITINGS

OF

SAINT PAUL.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE MORALITY OF PAGANISM, SHOWING THE NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

It cannot, we presume, be thought foreign to our purpose to introduce an Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of St. Paul, with a brief retrospect of the moral condition of the Gentile nations at that period when the great Apostle of the Gentiles first published Christianity among them.

The morality of a people necessarily partakes of the nature of their theology; and in proportion as it is founded on the knowledge of the true God, in such proportion it tends to improve

the conduct of man. The meanest Christian believer has here an advantage over the most enlightened heathen philosopher; for as what he knows of the nature of God arises chiefly from what he knows of Christ, and entirely from what is revealed in Scripture, he gains from those divine sources more clear and distinct views of the Deity than unassisted reason could ever attain; and of consequence, more correct ideas of what is required of himself, both with respect to God and man. His ideas may be mean in their expression, compared with the splendid language of the sages of antiquity; but the cause of the superiority of his conceptions is obvious. While they go about to establish their own wisdom, he submits to the wisdom of God, as he finds it in his word. What inadequate views must the wisest pagans, though "they felt after him," have entertained of Deity, who could at best only contemplate him in his attributes of power and beneficence, whilst their highest unassisted flights could never reach the remotest conception of that incomprehensible blessing, the union of his justice and mercy in the redemption of the world by his Son — a blessing familiar and intelligible to the most illiterate Christian.

The religion of the heathens was so deplorably bad in its principle, that it is no wonder if their practice was proportionally corrupt. "Those just measures of right and wrong,"

says Locke, "which necessity had introduced, which the civil laws prescribed, or philosophy recommended, *stood not on their true foundation.*" They served, indeed, to tie society together, and by these bands and ligaments promoted order and convenience: but there was no Divine command to make them respected; and there will naturally be little reverence for a law, where the legislator is not reverenced, much less where he is not recognised. There will also be little obedience to a law without sanctions, where neither penalty is feared, nor reward expected.

Previous to the establishment of Christianity, philosophy had attained to its utmost perfection, and had shown how low was its highest standard. It had completely betrayed its inability to effect a revolution in the minds of men. "Human reason," says the same great authority above quoted, "never yet, from unquestionable principles or clear deductions, made out an entire body of the law of nature. If a collection could be made of all the moral precepts in the pagan world, many of which may be found in the Christian religion, that would not at all hinder, but that the world still stood as much in need of our Saviour, and of the morality he taught." The law of the New Testament recommends itself to our regard by its excellence, and to our obedience by the authority of the Lawgiver. Christianity, therefore, presents not

only the highest perfection, but the surest standard, of morals.

In a multitude of the noble sentences and beautiful aphorisms of many of the heathen writers, there was, indeed, a strong tone of morality. But these fine sentiments, not flowing from any perennial source, had seldom any powerful effect on conduct. Our great poet has noticed this discordance between principle and practice in his dialogue between two great and virtuous Romans. — Cassius, who disbelieved a future state, reproves Brutus for the inconsistency between his desponding temper and the doctrines of his own Stoic school: —

> You make no use of your philosophy,
> If you give way to accidental evils.

Many of their works, in almost every species of literature, exhibit such perfection as to stretch the capacity of the reader, while they kindle his admiration, and invest, with no inconsiderable reputation, him who is able to seize their meaning, and to taste their beauties; so that an able critic of their writings almost ranks with him who excels in original composition. In like manner the lives of their great men abound in splendid sayings, as well as heroic virtues, to such a degree, as to exalt our idea of the human intellect, and, in single instances, of the human character. We say, in single instances, for their idea of a perfect character wanted consistency, wanted completeness. It had many constituent

parts, but there was no *whole* which comprised them. The moral fractions made up no integral. The virtuous man thought it no derogation from his virtue to be selfish, the conqueror to be revengeful, the philosopher to be arrogant, the injured to be unforgiving: forbearance was cowardice, humility was baseness, meekness was pusillanimity. Not only their justice was stained with cruelty, but the most cruel acts of injustice were the road to a popularity which immortalised the perpetrator. The good man was his own centre. Their virtues wanted to be drawn out of themselves, and this could not be the case. As their goodness did not arise from any knowledge, so it could not spring from any imitation of the Divine perfections. That inspiring principle, *the love of God*, the vital spark of all religion, was a motive of which they had not so much as heard; and if they had, it was a feeling which it would have been impossible for them to cherish, since some of the best of their deities were as bad as the worst of themselves.

When the history of their own religion contained little more than the quarrels and the intrigues of these deities, could we expect that the practice of the people would be much better, or more consistent than their belief? If the divinities were at once holy and profligate, shall we wonder if the adoration was at once devout and impure? The worshipper could not commit a crime but he might vindicate it by the example

of some deity; he could not gratify a sinful appetite of which his religion did not furnish a justification.

Besides this, all their scattered documents of virtue could never make up a body of morals. They wanted a connecting tie. The doctrines of one school were at variance with those of another. Even if they could have united their opinions, and selected the best from each sect, so as to have patched up a code, still the disciples of one sect would not have submitted to the leader of another, the system would have wanted a head, or the head would have wanted authority, and the code would have wanted sanctions.

And as there was no governing system, so there was no universal rule of morals, for morality was different in different places. In some countries people thought it no more a crime to expose their own children than in others to adopt those of their neighbour. The Persians were not looked upon as the worst moralists for marrying their mothers, nor the Hyrcanians for not marrying at all, nor the Sogdians for murdering their parents, nor the Scythians for eating their dead.*

The best writers seldom made use of arguments drawn from future blessedness to enforce their moral instruction. Excellently as they discoursed on the beauty of virtue, their disquisitions generally seemed to want a motive and an end.

* Plutarch relates, that Alexander, after conquering these countries, had reformed some of their evil habits.

—Did not such a state of comfortless ignorance, of spiritual degradation, of moral depravity, emphatically call for a religion which should "bring life and immortality to light?" Did it not imperatively require that Spirit which should "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment?" Did it not pant for the knowledge of that "blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin?"

Even those fine theorists who have left us beautiful reflections on the Divinity, have bequeathed no rule for his worship, no direction for his service, no injunctions to obey him: they have given us little encouragement to virtue, and no alleviation to sorrow, but the impracticable injunction, not to feel it. The eight short beatitudes in the 5th of Saint Matthew convey, not only more promises to virtue, and more consolation to sufferers, but more appropriate promise to the individual grace, more specific comfort to the specific suffering, than are to be found in all the ancient tomes of moral discipline.

Those who were invested with a sacred character, and who delivered the pretended sense of the Oracles, talked much of the gods, but said little of goodness; while the philosophers who, though they were professors of wisdom, were, not generally to the vulgar, teachers of morals, seldom gave the Deity a place in their ethics. Between these conflicting instructors the people stood little chance of acquiring any

just notions of moral rectitude. They were, indeed, under a necessity of attending the worship of the temples, they believed that the neglect of this duty would offend the gods; but in their attendance they were taught neither that purity of heart, nor that practical virtue, which might have been supposed likely to please them. The philosophers, if they were disposed to give the people some rules of duty, were over-matched by the priests, who knew that they should gratify them more by omitting what they so little relished. As to the people themselves, they did not desire to be better than the priests wished to make them. They found processions pleasanter than prayers, ceremonies cheaper than duties, and sacrifices easier than self-denials, with the additional recommendation, that the one made amends for the want of the other.*

When a violent plague raged in Rome, the method they took for appeasing the deities, and putting a stop to the distemper, was the establishment of a theatre and the introduction of plays. The plague, however, having no dramatic taste, continued to rage. But neither the piety nor ingenuity of the suppliants was exhausted. A nail driven into the Temple of Jupiter was found to be a more promising expedient. But the gods, being as hard as the metal of which the expiation was made, were no

* See Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity.

more moved by the nail, than the plague had been by the theatrical exhibition; though the event was thought of sufficient importance for the creation of a Dictator! — What progress had reason, to say nothing of religion, made in the first metropolis in the world, when a nail or a play was thought a rational expedient for pacifying the gods and stopping the pestilence? Nor does reason, mere human reason, seem to have grown wiser in her old age. During the late attempt to establish heathenism in a neighbouring country, does it not look as if the thirty theatres which were opened every night in its capital in the early part of the Revolution had been intended, in imitation of the Romans, whose religion, titles, and offices the French affected to adopt, as a nightly expiation to the *Goddess of Reason* for the cruelties and carnage of the day?

Whatever conjectural notions some of the wise might entertain of a future state, the people at large could only acquire the vague and comfortless ideas of it, which might be picked up from the poets. This indefinite belief, immersed in fable, and degraded by the grossest superstition, added as little to the piety as to the happiness of mankind. The intimations of their Tartarus, and their Elysian fields, were so connected with fictions, as to convey to the mind no other impression, but that they were fictions themselves. Such uncertain glimmer-

ings of such a futurity could afford neither warning nor encouragement, neither cheerful hope nor salutary fear. They might amuse the mind, but never could influence the conduct. They might gratify the imagination, but could not communicate "a hope full of immortality." They neither animated the pious, nor succoured the tempted, nor supported the afflicted, nor cheered the dying.

The study of their mythology could carry with it nothing but corruption. It intended neither to bring glory to God, nor peace and good will, much less salvation, to men. It was invented to embellish the fabulous periods of their history, to flatter illustrious families, by celebrating the human exploits of their deified progenitors; and thus to give an additional and national interest to their bewitching fables. What a system did those countries uphold, when the more probable way to make the people virtuous, was to keep them ignorant of religion! — when the best way to teach them their duty to man, was to keep their deities out of sight!

It is, indeed, but justice to acknowledge, that most of the different schools of philosophy held some one great truth. Aristotle maintained the existence of a First Cause; Cicero, in opposition to the disciples of Epicurus, acknowledged a superintending Providence. Many of the Stoics were of opinion, that the consumma-

tion of all things would be effected by fire. Yet every philosopher, however rational in many parts of his system, not only adopted some absurdity himself, but wove it into his code. One believed that the soul was only a vapour, which was transmuted from body to body, and was to expiate, in the shape of a brute, the sins it had committed under that of a man. Another affirmed that the soul was a material substance, and that matter was endowed with the faculties of thought and reason. Others imagined every star to be a god. Some denied not only a superintending, but a creating Providence; insisting that the world was made, without any plan or contrivance, by a fortuitous concourse of certain particles of matter; and that the members of the human body were not framed for the several purposes to which they have been accidentally applied. One affirmed the eternity of the world; another, that we can be certain of nothing, — that even our own existence is doubtful.

A religion so absurd, which had no basis even in probability, and no attraction but what it borrowed from a preposterous fancy, could not satisfy the deep-thinking philosopher; — a philosophy abstruse and metaphysical was not sufficiently accommodated to general use to suit the people. Lactantius, on the authority of Plato, relates, that Socrates declared there was no such thing as human wisdom. In short,

all were dissatisfied. The wise had a vague desire for a religion which comprehended great objects, and had noble ends in view. The people stood in need of a religion which should bring relief to human wants, and consolation to human miseries. They wanted a simple way, proportioned to their comprehension; a short way, proportioned to their leisure; a living way, which should give light to the conscience and support to the mind; a way founded, not on speculation, but evidence, which should carry conversion to the heart as well as conviction to the understanding. Such a religion God was preparing for them in the Gospel of his Son. Christianity was calculated to supply the exigencies both of the Greeks and of the barbarians; but the former, though they more readily acknowledged their want, more slowly welcomed the relief; while the latter, though they less felt the one, more willingly accepted the other.

Alexander, though he had the magnanimity to declare to his illustrious preceptor, that he had rather excel in knowledge than in power, yet blamed him for divulging to the world those secrets in learning which he wished to confine exclusively to themselves. How would he have been offended with the Christian philosophy, which, though it has mysteries for all, has no secrets for any! How would he have been offended with that bright hope of glory, which would have displayed itself in the same efful-

gence to his meanest soldier, as to the conqueror of Persia!

But how would both the monarch and the philosopher have looked on a religion, which after kindling their curiosity, by intimating it had greater things to bestow than learning and empire, should dash their high hopes, by making these great things consist in poverty of spirit, in being little in their own eyes, in not loving the world, nor the things of the world?

But what would they have said to a religion which placed human intellect in an inferior degree in the scale of God's gifts; and even degraded it from thence, when not used to his glory? What would they have thought of a religion, which, so far from being sent exclusively to the conquerors in arms, or the leaders in science, frankly declared at its outset, that "not many mighty, not many noble were called;" which professed, while it filled the hungry with good things, to send the rich empty away?

Yet that mysterious HOPE which Alexander declared was all he kept for himself, when he profusely scattered kingdoms among his favourites; — those ambiguous TEARS which he shed, because he had no more worlds to conquer; — that deeply-felt, but ill-understood hope, those undefined and unintelligible tears, mark a profounder feeling of the vanity of this world, a more fervent panting after something better than power or knowledge, a more heartfelt

"longing after immortality," than almost any express language which philosophy has recorded.

"Learn of me," would have been thought a dignified exordium for the founder of a new religion by the masters of the Grecian schools. But when they came to the humbling motive of the injunction, "for I am meek and lowly in heart," how would their expectations have been damped! They would have thought it an abject declaration from the lips of a great Teacher, unless they had understood that grand paradox of Christianity, that lowliness of heart was among the highest attainments to be made by a rational creature.

When they had heard the beginning of that animating interogation, — Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? methinks I behold the whole Portico and Academy emulously rush forward at an invitation so alluring, at a challenge so personal: but how instinctively would they have shrunk back at the repulsive question which succeeds; — Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Yet would not Christianity, well understood and faithfully received, have taught these exalted spirits, that to look down upon what is humanly great, is a loftier attainment than to look up to it?

Would it not have carried a sentiment to the heart of Alexander, a system to the mind of Aristotle, which their respective, though differently pursued, careers of ambition utterly failed of furnishing to either?

Reason, even by those who possessed it in the highest perfection, as it gave no adequate view even of natural religion, so it made no adequate provision for correct morals. The attempt appears to have been above the reach of human powers. "God manifested in the flesh," — He who was not only true, but THE TRUTH, and who taught the truth as "one having authority," — was alone competent to this great work. The duty of submission to Divine power was to the multitude more intelligible than the intricate deductions of reason. That God is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, make a compendious summary both of natural and revealed religion; they are propositions which carry their own explanation, disentangled from those trains of argument, which, as few could have been brought to comprehend, perhaps it was the greatest wisdom in the philosopher never to have proposed to them.

The most skilful dialectitian could only reason on known principles; but without the superinduction of revealed religion, he could only, with all his efforts, and they have been prodigious, furnish "rules" but not "arms." Logic is indeed a powerful weapon to fence, but not to fight with; that which is a conqueror in the schools is impotent in the field. It is powerful to refute a sophism, but weak to repel a temptation. It may defeat an opponent made up like itself of pure intellect, but is no match

for so substantial an assailant as the sensual appetites. It yields to the onset, when the antagonists are furious passions and headstrong desires. It can make a successful thrust against an opinion, but is too feeble to "pull down the strong holds of sin and Satan."

If, through the strength of human corruption, the restraining power of Divine grace is still too frequently resisted, — if the offered light of the Holy Spirit is still too frequently quenched, what must have been the state of mankind, when that grace was not made known, when that light was not fully revealed, when "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people?" But under the clear illumination of evangelical truth every precept becomes a principle, every argument a motive, every direction a duty, every doctrine a law; and why? *Because thus saith the Lord.*

Christianity, however, is not merely a religion of authority; the soundest reason embraces most confidently what the most explicit revelation has taught, and the deepest enquirer is usually the most convinced Christian. The reason of philosophy, is a disputing reason, that of Christianity, an obeying reason. The glory of the pagan religion consisted in virtuous sentiments, the glory of the Christian, in the pardon and the subjugation of sin. The humble Christian may say with one of the ancient Fathers, — I will not glory because I am righteous, but because I am redeemed.

CHAP. II.

ON THE HISTORICAL WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

AMONG the innumerable evidences of the truth of Christianity, there is one of so rare and extraordinary a nature, as might of itself suffice to carry conviction to the mind of every unprejudiced enquirer, even if this proof were not accompanied by such a cloud of concurring testimonies.

The sacred volume is composed by a vast variety of writers, men of every different rank and condition, of every diversity of character and turn of mind: the monarch and the plebeian, the illiterate and the learned, the foremost in talent and the moderately gifted in natural advantages, the historian and the legislator, the orator and the poet; — each had his immediate vocation, each his peculiar province; some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists; living in ages remote from each other, under different modes of civil government, under different dispensations of the Divine economy; filling a period of time which reached from the first dawn of heavenly light to its meridian radiance. The Old Testament and the New, the Law and the Gospel; the prophets predicting events, and the evan-

gelists recording them; the doctrinal yet didactic epistolary writers, and he who closed the Sacred Canon in the apocalyptic vision; — all these furnished their respective portions, and yet all tally with a surprising correspondence; all the different materials are joined with a completeness the most satisfactory, with an agreement the most incontrovertible.

This instance of uniformity without design, of difference without discordance; this consistency maintained through a long series of ages, without a possibility of the ordinary methods for conducting such a plan; these unparalleled congruities, these unexampled coincidences, form altogether a species of evidence, of which there is no other instance in the history of all the other books in the world.

All these variously gifted writers here enumerated concur in this grand peculiarity, — that all have the same end in view, all are pointing to the same object; all, without any projected collusion, are advancing the same scheme; each brings in his several contingent, without any apparent consideration how it may unite with the portions brought by other contributors, without any spirit of accommodation, without any visible intention to make out a case, without indeed any actual resemblance, more than that every separate portion being derived from the same spring, each must be governed by one common principle, and that principle being

Truth itself, must naturally and consentaneously produce assimilation, conformity, agreement. What can we conclude from all this, but what is indeed the inevitable conclusion, — a conclusion which forces itself on the mind, and compels the submission of the understanding, that all this, under differences of administration, is the work of one and the same great, Omniscient, and Eternal Spirit?

If, however, from the general uniformity of plan visible throughout the whole Sacred Canon results one of the most cogent and complete arguments for its divine original, others will also arise from its mode of execution, its peculiar diversities, and some other circumstances attending it, not so easily brought under one single point of view;—does it not look as if Almighty Wisdom refused to divide the glory of his revelation with man, when passing by the shining lights of the pagan world, He chose, in the promulgation of the Gospel, to make use of men of ordinary endowments, men possessing the usual defects and prejudices of persons so educated and so circumstanced? Not only the other immediate followers, but even the biographers of Christ, were persons of no distinguished abilities. Integrity was almost their sole, as it was their most requisite, qualification. On this point it is not too much to maintain, that the writings of each of these men are not only so consistent with each other, but

also with themselves, as to offer individually, as well as aggregately, a proof of their own veracity, as well as of the truth of the Gospel itself.

Had they, however, all recorded uniformly the same more inconsiderable particulars; had there not been that natural diversity, that incidental variation, observable in all other historians; — had not one preserved passages which the others overlooked, some recording more of the actions of Jesus, others treasuring up more of his discourses; some particularising the circumstances of his birth, others only referring to it as a fact not requiring fresh authentication; another again plainly adverting to it by "the WORD that was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" and adding a new circumstance by citing the testimony of the Baptist to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" — in short, had there been in the several relations not mere consistency, but positive identity, then, not only the fidelity of the writers would have been questionable, and concert and design justly have been suspected, but we should in effect have had only the testimony of one Gospel instead of four.

But to pass to other evidences of truth. — The manner in which these writers speak of themselves is at once a proof of their humility and of their veracity. The conversion of Saint Matthew is slightly related by himself, and in the most

modest terms. He simply says, speaking in the third person, "Jesus saw a man named Matthew, and saith unto him, Follow me; and he arose and followed him: and as Jesus sat at meat in the house, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him."* Not a word is said of a sacrifice so honourable to himself, and so generously recorded by Saint Luke in those words, *he left all*, and followed him; not a word of the situation he renounced at the first call of the Master, and which appears to have been lucrative from "the great feast he made for him in his own house, and the great company of publicans and others who sat down with him."† Saint Luke relates only his hospitality; Saint Matthew, as if to abase himself the more, describes only the sinners which made up his society previous to his conversion. The other Evangelists are equally free from egotism. Saint John, when obliged to speak of himself, is only "the disciple whom Jesus loved;"—again he is "that other disciple."

These sober recorders of events the most astonishing are never carried away, by the circumstances they relate, into any pomp of diction, into any use of superlatives. There is not, perhaps, in the whole Gospel a single interjection, not an exclamation, not any artifice to call the

* Matthew, ch. ix. † St. Luke, ch. v.

reader's attention to the marvels of which the relaters were the witnesses. Absorbed in their holy task, no alien idea presents itself to their mind: the object before them fills it. They never digress, are never called away by the solicitations of vanity, nor the suggestions of curiosity. No image starts up to divert their attention. There is, indeed, in the Gospels, much imagery, much allusion, much allegory, but they proceed from their Lord, and are recorded as his. The writers never fill up the intervals between events. They leave circumstances to make their own impression, instead of helping out the reader by any reflections of their own. They always feel the holy ground on which they stand. They preserve the gravity of history and the severity of truth, without enlarging the outline or swelling the expression.

The Evangelists all agree in this most unequivocal character of veracity, that of criminating themselves. They record their own errors and offences with the same simplicity with which they relate the miracles and sufferings of their Lord. Indeed their dulness, mistakes, and failings are so intimately blended with his history, by their continual demands upon his patience and forbearance, as to make no inconsiderable or unimportant part of the history itself.

The very slowness of their belief, the reluctance of their assent, so far from impeaching

the truth of the Gospel, powerfully establish it; for these cautious, distrustful men, not only became bold preachers of the faith of Jesus, but gave the soundest evidence of their conviction, by laying down their lives in its confirmation.

This fidelity is equally admirable both in the composition and in the preservation of the Old Testament; a book which every where testifies against those whose history it contains, and not seldom against the relaters themselves. The author of the Pentateuch proclaims, in the most pointed terms, his own frailties as well as the ingratitude of the chosen people towards God. He prophesies that they will go on filling up the measure of their offences, calls heaven and earth to witness against them that he has delivered his own soul, declares that as they have worshipped gods which were no gods, God will punish them by calling a people who were no people. Yet this book, so disgraceful to their national character, this register of their own offences, they would rather die than lose. "This," says the admirable Pascal, "is an instance of integrity which has no example in the world, no root in nature." In the Pentateuch and the Gospels, therefore, these parallel, these unequalled instances of sincerity, are incontrovertible proofs of the truth of both.

It is obvious that the impression which was to be made should owe nothing to the skill, but every thing to the veracity of the writers. They

never tried to improve upon the doctrines or the requirements of their Master, by mixing their own wisdom with them. Though their views were not clear, their obedience was implicit. It was not, however, a mere mechanical obedience, but an undisputing submission to the Divine teaching. Even at the glorious scene of the Transfiguration their amazement did not get the better of their fidelity. There was no vain impatience to disclose the wonders which had passed, and of which they had been allowed the honour of being witnesses. Though they inserted it afterwards in their narrations, "they, as they were commanded, kept it close, and told no man in those days what they had seen."

The simplicity of the narrative is never violated; there is even no panegyric on the august person they commemorate; not a single epithet of commendation. When they mention an extraordinary effect of his divine eloquence, it is history, not eulogy, that speaks. They say nothing of their own admiration; it is "*the people* who were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Again, it was "the *multitudes* marvelled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel." Again, it was the *officers*, not the writer, who said, "never man spake like this man."

In recording the most stupendous events, we are never called to an exhibition of their own pity, or their own wonder, or their own admir-

ation. In relating the most soul-moving circumstances, there is no attempt to be pathetic, no aim to work up the feelings of the reader, no appeal to his sympathy, no studied finish, no elaborate excitement. Jesus wept; — no comment. He is hungry; — no compassion escapes them. He is transfigured; — no expression of astonishment. He is agonized; — the narrative does not rise in emphasis. He is betrayed; — no execration of the betrayer. He is condemned; — no animadversions on the iniquitous judge; while their own denial and desertion are faithfully recorded. He expires; — no remark on the tremendous catastrophe, no display of their own sorrow. Facts alone supply the void; and what facts? The earth quakes, the sun is eclipsed, the graves give up their dead. In such a history, it is very true, fidelity was praise, fact was glory. And yet, if, on the one hand, there were no need of the rhetorician's art to embellish the tale, what mere rhetoricians could have abstained from using it?

Thus, it seems obvious, that unlettered men were appointed to this great work, in order that the success of the Gospel might not be suspected of owing any thing to natural ability, or to splendid attainment. This arrangement, while it proves the astonishing progress of Christianity to have been caused by its own energy, serves to remove every just suspicion of

the contrivance of fraud, the collusions of interest, or the artifices of invention.

Had the first apostles been men of genius, they might have injured the purity of the Gospel by bringing their ingenuity into it. Had they been men of learning, they might have imported from the schools of Greece and Rome, each from his own sect, some of its peculiar infusions, and thus have vitiated the simplicity of the Gospel. Had they been critics and philosophers, there might have been endless debates which part of Christianity was the power of God, and which the result of man's wisdom. Thus, though corruptions soon crept into the church, yet no impurities could reach the Gospel itself. Some of its teachers became heretical, but the pure word remained unadulterated. However the philosophising or the judaising teachers might subsequently infuse their own errors into their own preaching, the Gospel preserved its own integrity. They might mislead their followers, but they could not deteriorate the New Testament.

It required different gifts to promulgate and to maintain Christianity. The Evangelists did not so much attempt to argue the truth of the Redeemer's doctrines, as practically to prove that they were of Divine origin. If called on for a defence, they worked a miracle. If they could not produce a cogent argument, they

could produce a paralytic walking. If they could not open the eyes of the prejudiced, they could open those of the blind. Such attestation was, to the eye-witnesses, argument the most unanswerable. The most illiterate person could judge of this species of evidence so peculiar to Christianity. He could know whether he saw a sick man restored to life by a word, or a lame man take up his bed and walk, or one who had been dead four days instantly obey the call, — "Lazarus, come forth!" About a sentiment there might be a diversity of suffrages; about an action which all saw, all could entertain but one opinion. The caviller might have refuted a syllogism, and a fallacy might have imposed on the multitude, but no sophistry could counteract ocular demonstration.

But as God does nothing in vain, so he never employs irrelevant instruments or superfluous means. He did not see fit to be at the expense of a perpetual miracle to maintain and carry on that church which he had thought proper to establish by miraculous powers. When, therefore, the Gospel was immutably fixed on its own eternal basis, and its truth unimpeachably settled by the authentic testimony of so many eye-witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, a writer was brought forward, contemporary, but not connected, with them. Not only was he not confederate with the first institutors of Christianity, but so implacably hos-

tile was he to them, that he had assisted at the death of the first martyr.

As the attestation of one notorious enemy in favour of a cause is considered equivalent to that of many friends, thus did this distinguished adversary seem to be raised up to confirm and ratify all the truths he had so furiously opposed; to become the most able advocate of the cause he had reprobated, the most powerful champion of the Saviour he had vilified. He was raised up to unfold more at large those doctrines which could not be so explicitly developed in the historical portions, while an immediate revelation from heaven supplied to him the actual opportunities and advantages which the Evangelists had enjoyed. Nothing short of such a Divine communication could have placed Saint Paul on a level with the other apostles; had he been taught of man, he must have been inferior to those who were taught of Jesus.

For Saint Paul had not the honour to be the personal disciple of his Lord. His conversion and preaching were subsequent to the first illumination of the Gospel; an intimation, possibly, that though revelation and human learning should not be considered as sharing between them the work of spiritual instruction, yet that human learning might henceforward become a valuable adjunct, and a most suitable, though subordinate, accessory in maintaining the cause

of that Divine truth which it had no hand in establishing.

The ministry of Saint Paul was not to be circumscribed, as that of his immediate precursors had been, by the narrow limits of the Jewish church. As he was designated to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, as he was to bear his testimony before rulers and scholars; as he was to carry his mission into the presence of "kings, and not to be ashamed,"—it pleased Infinite Wisdom, which always fits the instrument to the work, and the talent to the exigence, to accommodate most exactly the endowments of Paul to the demands that would be made upon them; and as Divine Providence caused Moses to acquire in Egypt the learning which was to prepare him for the legislator of a people so differently circumstanced, it pleased the same Infinite Wisdom to convey to Paul, through the mouth of a Jewish teacher, the knowledge he was to employ for the Gentiles, and to adapt his varied acquirements to the various ranks, characters, prejudices, and local circumstances of those before whom he was to advocate the noblest cause ever assigned to man.

Of all these providential advantages he availed himself with a wisdom, aptness, and appropriateness, without a parallel;—a wisdom derived from that Divine Spirit which guided all his thoughts, words, and actions; and with a teach-

ableness which evidently proved that he was never *disobedient to the heavenly vision.*

Indeed it seemed necessary, in order to demonstrate that the principles of Christianity are not unattainable, nor its precepts impracticable, that the New Testament should, in some part, present to us a full exemplification of its doctrines and of its spirit; that they should, to produce their practical effect, be embodied in a form purely human, — for the character of the founder of its religion is incarnate Deity. Did the Scriptures present no such exhibition, infidelity might have availed itself of the omission, for the purpose of asserting that Christianity was only a bright chimera, a beautiful fiction of the imagination; and Plato's fair idea might have been brought into competition with the doctrines of the Gospel. But in Saint Paul is exhibited a portrait which not only illustrates its Divine truth, but establishes its moral efficacy; — a portrait entirely free from any distortion in the drawing, from any extravagance in the colouring.

It is the representation of a man struggling with the sins and infirmities natural to man; yet habitually triumphing over them by that Divine grace which had first rescued him from prejudice, bigotry, and unbelief. It represents him not only resisting such temptations as are common to men, but surmounting trials to which no other man was ever called; furnishing in his

whole practice not only an instructor but a model; showing every where in his writings that the same offers, the same supports, the same victories, are tendered to every suffering child of mortality, — that the waters of eternal life are not restricted to prophets and apostles, but are offered freely to every one that thirsteth, — offered without money and without price.

CHAP. III.

ON THE EPISTOLARY WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, PARTICULARLY SAINT PAUL.

CAN the reader of taste and feeling, who has followed the much-enduring hero of the Odyssey with growing delight and increasing sympathy, though in a work of fiction, through all his wanderings, peruse with inferior interest the genuine voyages of the Apostle of the Gentiles over nearly the same seas? The fabulous adventurer, once landed, and safe on the shores of his own Ithaca, the reader's mind is satisfied, for the object of his anxiety is at rest. But not so ends the tale of the Christian hero. — Who ever closed Saint Luke's narrative of the diversified events of Saint Paul's travels; who ever accompanied him with the interest his history demands, from the commencement of his trials at Damascus to his last deliverance from shipwreck, and left him *preaching in his own hired house at Rome*, without feeling as if he had abruptly lost sight of some one very dear to him, without sorrowing that they should see his face no more, without indulging a wish that the intercourse could have been carried on to the end, though that end were martyrdom?

Such readers, and perhaps only such, will rejoice to renew their acquaintance with this *very chiefest of the apostles;* not indeed in the communication of subsequent facts, but of important principles; not in the records of the biographer, but in the doctrines of the saint. To the history of Saint Paul in the Sacred Oracles succeed his Epistles. And these Epistles, as if through design, open with that "to the beloved of God called to be saints" in that very city, the mention of his residence in which, concludes the preceding narrative.

Had the Sacred Canon closed with the evangelical narrations, had it not been determined in the counsels of Divine Wisdom, that a subsequent portion of inspired Scripture in another form should have been added to the historical portions, that the Epistles should have conveyed to us the results of the mission and the death of Christ, how immense would have been the disadvantage, and how irreparable the loss! May we presume to add, how much less perfect would have been our view of the scheme of Christianity, had the New Testament been curtailed of this important portion of religious and practical instruction!

We should indeed have felt the same adoring gratitude for the benefits of the Redeemer, but we should have been in comparative ignorance of the events consequent upon his resurrection. We should have been totally at a loss to know

how and by whom the first Christian churches were founded; how they were conducted, and what was their progress. We should have had but a slender notion of the manner in which Christianity was planted, and how wonderfully it flourished in the heathen soil. Above all, we should have been deprived of that divine instruction, equally the dictate of the Holy Spirit, with which the Epistles abound; or, which would have been worse than ignorance, uninspired men, fanatics, or impostors, would have attached to the Gospel their glosses, conceits, errors, and misinterpretations. We should have been turned over for information to some of those spurious gospels, and more than doubtful epistles, of which mention is made in the early part of ecclesiastical history. What attempts might have been made by such writers to amuse curiosity with a sequel of the history of the persons named in the New Testament! How might they have misled us by unprofitable details of the Virgin Mary, or adventures of Joseph of Arimathea!

What legends might have been invented, what idolatry even might have been incorporated with the true worship of God; what false history appended to the authentic record! Not only is the Divine Wisdom manifest in carrying on through the Epistles a confirmation of the spirit and power of Christianity, but the same design is no less apparent in closing the book

with the Apocalypse,—a writing which contains the testimony of the last surviving disciple of Jesus in extreme old age, to which he seems to have been providentially preserved for the very purpose of protecting the Gospel from innovations which were beginning to corrupt it.

The narratives of the Evangelists would indeed have remained perfect in themselves, even without the Epistles; but never could their truths have been so clearly understood, or their doctrines so fully developed, as they now are. Our Saviour himself intimated, that there would be a more full and complete knowledge of his doctrines, after he had ceased to deliver them, than there was at the time. How indeed could the doctrine of the atonement, and of pardon through his blood, have been so explicitly set forth during his life, as they afterwards were in the Epistles, especially in those of Saint Paul?

Saint Luke, at the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, referring the friend to whom he inscribes it to his "former Treatise of all that Jesus began to do, and to teach, till he was taken up, after that he had through the Holy Ghost given commandment to the Apostles," seems plainly to indicate that the *doing* and the *teaching* were to be carried on by them. All their doubts were at length removed. They had now a plenary conviction of the divinity of Christ's person, and of the dignity of his mission. They had now witnessed his glorious resurrec-

tion and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. They had attained the fullest assurance of the truths they were to proclaim, and had had time to acquire the completest certainty of their moral efficacy on the heart and life.

It was therefore ordained by that Wisdom which cannot err, that the Apostles, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, should work up all the documents of the anterior Scriptures into a more systematic form; — that they should more fully unfold their doctrines, extract the essence of their separate maxims, collect the scattered rays of spiritual light into a focus, and blend the whole into one complete body.

The Epistles, therefore, are an inestimable appendix to the Evangelists. The memoir, which contains the actions of the Apostles, the work of an Evangelist also, stands between these two portions of the New Testament. Thus, no chasm is left; and the important events, which this connecting link supplies, — particularly the descent of the Holy Spirit, the emblematic vision of Saint Peter, and the conversion and apostleship of Saint Paul, — naturally prepare the mind for that full and complete commentary on the historical books, which the Epistles, more especially those of Saint Paul, present to us.

Saint Paul was favoured with a particular Revelation, a personal disclosure to him of the truths with which the other disciples were previously acquainted. This special distinction

placed Paul on a level with his precursors. Though, in point of fact, he added nothing to the Gospel revelation, and in point of doctrine he only gave a larger exposition of truths previously communicated, of duties already enjoined, yet here was the warrant of his teaching, the broad seal of his apostleship. And unless we fall into the gross error of insisting that the Epistles in general were not equally given by Inspiration with other parts of the New Testament, I see not how any can withhold from the Epistles of Saint Paul in particular, that reverence which they profess to entertain for the entire letter of Revelation.

It is a hardship to which all writers on subjects exclusively religious are liable, that if, while they are warmly pressing some great and important point, they omit, at the same time, to urge some other point of great moment also, which they equally believe, but which they cannot in that connection introduce without breaking in on their immediate train of argument, they are accused of rejecting what they are obliged to overlook, though in its proper place they have repeatedly insisted upon that very truth; nay, though the whole tendency of their writings shows their equal faith in the doctrine they are said to have neglected. To this disingenuous treatment, amongst other more serious attacks upon his character, no author has been more obnoxious than the Apostle Paul. It has

been often intimated, that in dwelling on the efficacy of the death of Christ, he has not urged with sufficient frequency and energy the importance of Christian practice. He seems himself to have foreseen the probability of this reproach, and has accordingly provided against the consequence that would be drawn from his positions, if taken separately. It would be an endless task to cite the passages in which he is continually defending his doctrine against these anticipated misrepresentations. Among other modes of refutation, he sometimes states these false charges in the way of interrogatories. "Do we make void the law through faith?" And not contented with the solemn negative, "God forbid!" he adds a positive affirmative to the contrary: "Yea, we *establish* the law." In a similar manner he is before-hand with his censors in denying the expected charge, — "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" and he obtests the same Almighty name to his opposite practice. Readers, of different views, are without ceasing on the watch to take advantage of all the epistolary writers in this respect, while the fair method would surely be to form the general judgment, from the whole tenour and collective spirit of their writings.

But it has been argued with still greater boldness, that Saint Paul was not a disciple. — Granted. But his miraculous conversion entitled him to the confidence which some men more willingly place in those who were. This event is

circumstantially recorded by Saint Luke; and as if he foresaw the distrust which might hereafter arise, he has added to his first relation, in the ninth chapter of the Acts, two several reports of the same circumstance made by Saint Paul himself, first to the Jews, and afterwards to Festus and Agrippa. As Luke has recorded this astonishing fact three several times, we are not left to depend for its truth entirely on Saint Paul's own frequent allusions to it.

Much suspicion of this great Apostle is avowedly grounded on the remark of Saint Peter, who, in adverting to his "beloved brother Paul," observes, that "in his Epistles are some things hard to be understood, which they who are unstable and unlearned wrest to their own destruction." Here the caviller would desire to stop, or rather to garble the sentence which adds, "as they do also the other Scriptures;" thus casting the accusation, not upon Saint Paul or "the other Scriptures," but upon the misinterpreters of both. But Saint Peter farther includes in the same passage, that "Paul accounts the long-suffering of God to be salvation, *according to the wisdom given him.*" It is apparent, therefore, that though there may be more difficulty, there is not more danger in Saint Paul's Epistles, than in the rest of the Sacred Volume. Let us also observe what is the character of these subverters of truth,—the "unstable" in principle and the "unlearned"

in doctrine. If, then, you feel yourself in danger of being misled, in which of these classes will you desire to enrol your name? But it is worthy of observation, that, in this supposed censure of Saint Peter, we have in reality a most valuable testimony, not only to the excellence, but also to the inspiration of Saint Paul's writings; for he not only ascribes their composition to *the wisdom given unto him*, but puts them on a par with *the other Scriptures*,—a double corroboration of their Divine character.

This passage of Saint Peter, then, is so far from impugning the claim of Saint Paul to Divine inspiration, that we have here the fact itself established upon the authority of a favourite disciple and companion of Jesus. To invalidate such a testimony would be no less than to shake the pillars of Revelation.

Besides, as an eminent divine has observed, "If Saint Paul had been only a good man writing under that general assistance of the Spirit common to good men, it would be ascribing far too much to his compositions to suppose that the misunderstanding them could effect the *destruction* of the reader."

Saint Peter says only, that "some things" are difficult; but are there not difficulties in every part of Divine Revelation, in all the operations of God, in all the dispensations of Providence; difficulties insuperable in the natural as well as in the spiritual world? Difficulties

in the formation of the human body; in the union of that perishable body with its immortal companion? Is it not then probable that some difficulties in various parts of the Divine Oracles may be purposely left for the humiliation of pride, for the exercise of patience, for the test of submission, for the honour of faith? But allowing that in Saint Paul some things *are* hard to be understood, that is no reason for rejecting such things as are easy, for rejecting *all* things. Why should the very large proportion that is clear be slighted for the very small one that is obscure? Scholars do not so treat an ancient poet or historian. One or two perplexing passages, instead of shaking the credit of an author, rather whet the critic to a nearer investigation. Even if the local difficulty should prove invincible, it does not lessen the general interest excited by the work. They who compare spiritual things with spiritual, which is the true Biblical criticism, must perceive that the epistolary writers do not more entirely agree with each other, than they agree with the doctrines, precepts, and promises delivered on the Mount. And as the Sermon on the Mount is an exposition of the law of Moses, so the Epistles are an exposition of the law of Christ. Yet some persons discredit the one from an exclusive veneration for the other.

But is it not as derogatory from the dignity of our Lord to disparage the epistolary discussions written under he direction of his Holy

Spirit, written with a view to lay open in the clearest manner the truths he taught in the Gospel, as it would be to depreciate the facts themselves, which that Gospel records?

The more general respect for the Gospels seems partly to arise from the circumstance that they contain facts: the disregard implied for the Epistles from this cause, — that they enforce doctrines. The former, the generality feel they dare not resist; the latter they think they can oppose with more impunity. But of how much less value would be the record of these astonishing facts if there were neither doctrines to grow out of them, nor precepts to be built upon them! And where should we look for the full instruction to be deduced from both, but in the commentaries of those, to whom the charge of expounding the truths previously taught was committed? Our Saviour himself has left no written record. As the Father committed all judgment to the Son, so the Son committed all written instruction to his select servants.

One of these, who had written a Gospel, wrote also three Epistles. Another carried on the sequel of the evangelical history. If these men are worthy of confidence in one instance, why not in another? Fourteen of the Epistles were written by one who had an express revelation from Heaven; all the rest, the single chapter of St. Jude excepted, by the distinguished Apostles who were honoured with the

privilege of witnessing the transfiguration of their Lord. The three Epistles of Saint John are only a prolonged expression of the devout feelings which breathe throughout his narrative, the same lively manifestation of the *word made flesh* which shines throughout his Gospel.

In the Gospel, the doctrines and precepts are more dogmatically enjoined; in the Epistles they are enforced more argumentatively. The structure of the Epistle addressed to the Romans is the most systematical, the most profound in argument, the most comprehensive in design. All are equally consistent with each other, and with the general tenour of the antecedent Scriptures.

Does it not look as if the marked distinction which some readers make between the historical and the epistolary portions, arose from a most erroneous belief that they can more commodiously reconcile their own views, opinions, and practice, with the narratives of the Evangelists, than with the keen, penetrating, heart-exploring exposition of those very doctrines which are equally found, but not equally expanded, in the Gospels? These critical discoverers, however, may rest assured, that there is nothing more strong, nothing more pointed, nothing more unequivocally plain, nothing more awfully severe in any part of Saint Paul's writings than in the discourses of our Lord himself. He would indeed have overshot his duty in the same

proportion in which he had outgone his Master. Does Paul enjoin any thing more contrary to nature than the excision of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye? Does Paul any where exhibit a menace, I will not say *more* alarming, but so repeatedly alarming, as his Divine Master, who expressly, in one chapter only, the ninth of Saint Mark, three several times denounces eternal punishment on the irreclaimably impenitent, awfully marking not only the specific place, but the specific torment,—the undying worm, and the unquenched fire?

No: these scrupulous objectors add nothing to the character of our Lord by what they subduct from that of his Apostle. Perfection admits of no improvement; deity of no addition. To degrade any portion of the revealed will of God is no proof of reverence for Him whose will is revealed. But it is preposterous to insinuate that a regard for the Epistles is calculated to diminish a regard for the Gospels. Where else can we find such believing, such admiring, such adoring views of Him whose life the Gospel records? Where else are we so grounded in that love which passeth knowledge? Where else are we so continually taught to be looking unto Jesus? Where else are we so powerfully reminded that there is no other name under heaven by which we may be saved? We may as well assert, that the existing laws, of which *Magna Charta* is the original, diminish our re-

verence for this palladium itself; this basis of our political security, as the Gospel is of our moral and spiritual privileges. In both cases the derived benefit sends us back to the well-head from whence it flows.

He who professes to read the Holy Scriptures for his "instruction," should recollect, whenever he is disposed to be captious, that they are written also for his "correction." If we really believe that Christ speaks to us in the Gospels, we must believe that he speaks to us in the Epistles also. In the one he addresses us in his militant, in the other in his glorified character. In one, the Divine Instructor speaks to us on earth; in the other, from heaven. The internal wisdom, the divinity of the doctrines, the accordance both of doctrine and precept with those delivered by the Saviour himself, the powerful and abiding effects which, for near two thousand years, they have produced, and are actually producing, on the hearts and lives of multitudes; the same spirit which inspired the writer still ready to assist the reader; all together form, to every serious enquirer who reads them with an humble heart and a docile spirit, irrefragable arguments, unimpeachable evidence, that they possess as full a claim to inspiration, and consequently have as forcible demand on his belief and obedience, as any of the less litigated portions of the book of God.

Whoever, then, shall sit down to the perusal

of these Epistles without prejudice, will not rise from it without improvement. In any human science we do not lay aside the whole, because some parts are more difficult than others, we are rather stimulated to the work by the difficulty, than deterred from it; because we believe the attainment will reward the perseverance. There is, indeed, an essential difference between a diagram and a doctrine, the apprehension of the one solely depending on the capacity and application of the student, while the understanding of the other depends not merely on the industry, but on the temper with which we apply. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him."

Let any reader say, after perusing Saint Luke's biographical sketch of the Acts of the Apostles, after contemplating the work of the Spirit of God, and its effects on the lives and preaching of these primitive saints, whether he has not attained an additional insight into the genius and the results of Christianity since he finished reading the Evangelists? Let him say further, whether the light of Revelation, shining more and more as he advances, does not in his adding the perusal of the Epistles to that of the Acts, pour in upon his mental eye the full and perfect day?

As there was more leisure, as well as a more appropraites pace, in the Epistles for building up Christianity as a system than in the Gospels,

so these wise master-builders, "building on no other foundation than that which was laid," borrowed all the materials for the glorious edifice from the anterior Scriptures. They brought from their precursors in the immortal work the hewn stones with which the spiritual temple is constructed; and having compacted it with that which every portion supplied, squared, rounded, and polished the precious mass into perfect form and shape, into complete beauty, and everlasting strength.

CHAP. IV.

SAINT PAUL'S FAITH A PRACTICAL PRINCIPLE.

THERE are some principles and seeds of nature, some elements in the character of man, not indisposed for certain acts of virtue; we mean virtue as distinguished from the principle of pleasing God by the act or sentiment. Some persons naturally hate cruelty, others spurn at injustice; this man detests covetousness, that abhors oppression. Some of these dispositions certain minds find, and others fancy, within themselves. But for a man to go entirely out of himself, to live upon trust, to renounce all confidence in virtues which he possesses, and in actions which he performs; to cast himself entirely upon another; to seek to be justified, not by his own obedience, but by the obedience of that other; to look for eternal happiness, not from the merit of his own life, but from that of another's death, that death the most degrading, after a life the most despised;—for all this revolution in the mind and heart, there is no foundation, no seed, no element in nature; it is foreign to the make of man; if possessed, it is bestowed; if felt, it is derived: it is not a production, but an infusion; it is a principle, not indigenous, but implanted. The Apostle implies

that faith is not inherent, when he says, "to you it is *given* to believe."

This superinduced principle is Faith, a principle not only not inherent in nature, but diametrically contrary to it; a principle which takes no root in the soil of the natural heart; *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*. Its result is not merely a reformed, but a new life,—a life governed by the same principle which first communicated it.

The faith of mere assent, that faith which is purely a conviction of the understanding, seldom stirs beyond the point at which it firsts sits down. Being established on the same common ground with any scientific truth, or any acknowledged fact, it is not likely to advance, desiring nothing more than to retain its station among other accepted truths, and thus it continues to reside in the intellect alone. Though its local existence is allowed, it exhibits none of the undoubted signs of life,—activity, motion, growth.

But that vital faith with which the souls of the Scripture saints were so richly imbued, is an animating and pervading principle. It spreads and enlarges in its progress. It gathers energy as it proceeds. The more advanced are its attainments, the more prospective are its views. The nearer it approaches to the invisible realities to which it is stretching forward, the more their dominion over it increases, till it almost makes the future present, and the un-

seen visible. Its light becomes brighter, its flame purer, its aspirations stronger. Its increasing proximity to its object fills the mind, warms the heart, clears the sight, quickens the pace.

But as faith is of a spiritual nature, it cannot be kept alive without spiritual means. It requires for its sustenance aliment congenial with itself. Meditation familiarises it with its object; prayer keeps it close to its end. If thus cherished by perpetual exercise, sustained by the habitual contemplation of the oracles of God, and watered with the dews of his grace, it becomes the pregnant seed of every Christian virtue.

The Holy Scriptures have not left this faith to grow merely out of the stock of injunction, exhortation, or command; the inspired writers have not merely expatiated on its beauty as a grace, on its necessity as a duty, on its use as an instrument; but having infused it as a living and governing principle, have fortified their exhortations with instances the most striking, have illustrated their definitions with examples the most impressive.

The most indefatigable but rational champion of faith is the Apostle Paul. He every where demonstrates, that it is not a speculative dogma remaining dormant in the mind, but a lively conviction of the power and goodness of God, and of his mercy in Christ Jesus; a principle

received into the heart, acknowledged by the understanding, and operating on the practice.

Saint Paul, among the other sacred authors, seems to consider that faith is to the soul what the senses are to the body; it is spiritual sight. God is the object, faith is the visual ray. Christ is the substance, faith is the hand which lays hold on it. By faith the promises are in a manner substantiated. Our Saviour does not say, "he that believeth on me *shall have life*, but *has* life." It is not a blessing, of which the fruition is wholly reserved for heaven: in a spiritual sense, through faith the promise becomes performance, and assurance possession. The immortal seed is not only sown, but already sprung up in the soil of the renewed heart. The life of grace becomes the same in nature and quality with the life of glory, to which it leads. And if in this ungenial climate the plant will not attain its maturity, at least its progress intimates that it will terminate in absolute perfection.

In that invaluable epitome of Old-Testament biography, the eleventh of Hebrews, Saint Paul defines faith to be a present support and a claim to a future inalienable possession. He then exhibits the astonishing effects of faith displayed in men like ourselves, by marshalling the worthies who lived under the ancient economy, as actual evidences of the verity of this Divine principle; a principle which he thus, by num-

berless exemplifications, vindicates from the charge of being nothing more than an abstract notion, a visionary unproductive conceit, or an imaginary enthusiastic feeling. He combats this opinion by exhibiting characteristically the rich and abundant harvest springing from this prolific principle. On these illustrious examples our limits will not permit us to dwell; one or two instances must suffice.

The patriarchal father of the faithful, against hope believed in hope. Natural reliance, reasonable expectation, common experience, all were against him. From all these impediments he averted his eyes; he raised them to Him who had promised. Though the promise was so great as to seem incredible, his confidence in Omnipotence overbalanced all his apprehensions of any hinderances. With the eye of faith he not only saw his offspring as if immediately granted, but all the myriads which should hereafter descend from him. He saw the great anticipated blessing; he saw "the star come out of Jacob,"—"the sceptre rise out of Israel." Though an exclamation of wonder escaped him, it was astonishment untinctured with distrust; he disregarded second causes; difficulties disappeared, impossibilities vanished, faith was victorious.

In this glorious catalogue of those who conquered by faith, there is perhaps not one who offers a more appropriate lesson to the higher

classes of society than the great legislator of Israel. Here is a man sitting at ease in his possessions, enjoying the sweets of plenty, the dignity of rank, the luxuries of literature, the distinction of reputation. All these he voluntarily renounces; he foregoes the pomps of a court, the advantages of a city, then the most learned in the world: he relinquishes the delights of polished society; refuses to be called the grandson of a potent monarch; chooses rather to suffer affliction with his believing brethren, than to enjoy the temporary pleasures which a sinful connivance would have obtained for him: he esteems the reproach of Christ, — a Saviour unborn till many ages after, unknown but to the eye of faith, — greater than all the treasures of Egypt. The accomplished, the learned, and the polite, will be best able to appreciate the value of such a sacrifice. Does it not seem to come more home to the bosoms of the elegant and the opulent, and to offer an instruction, more intimate perhaps than is bequeathed even by those martial and heroic spirits who subdued kingdoms, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens? These are instances of faith, which, if more sublime, are still of less special application. Few are now called to these latter sufferings, but many in their measure and degree to the other. May

they ever bear in mind that Moses sustained his trials only *as seeing Him who is invisible!*

To change the heart of a sinner is a higher exertion of power than to create a man or even a world; in the latter case, as God made it out of nothing, so there was nothing to resist the operation; but in the former he has to encounter, not inanity, but repulsion; not an unobstructive vacuity, but a powerful counteraction; and to *believe* in the Divine energy which effects this renovation, is a greater exercise of faith than to believe that the Spirit of God, moving on the face of the waters, was the efficient cause of creation.

In producing this moral renovation God has to subdue, not only the rebel in arms against his king, but "the little state of man" in arms against himself, fighting against his convictions, refusing the redemption wrought for him. Almighty Goodness has the twofold work of providing pardon for offenders, and making them willing to receive it. To offer heaven, and then to prevail on man to accept it, is at once an act of God's omnipotence, and of his mercy.

Thus faith, which appears to be so easy, is of all things the most difficult; — which seems to be so common, is of all things most rare. To consider how reluctantly the human heart adopts this principle; how it evades and stipulates; how it procrastinates, even when it does not pointedly reject; how ingenious its

subterfuges, how specious its pretences; — and then to deny that faith is a supernatural gift, is to reject the concurring testimony of reason, of Scripture, of daily observation, of actual experience.

Saint Paul frequently intimates that faith is never a solitary attribute: he never separates it from humility, it being indeed the parent of that self-abasing grace. He also implies that faith is not, as some represent it, a disorderly, but a regulating principle; when he speaks of *the law of faith*, of the *obedience* of faith. Faith and repentance are the two qualities inseparably linked in the work of our salvation; repentance teaching us to abhor ourselves for sin, — faith, to go out of ourselves for righteousness. Holiness and charity Paul exhibits as its inseparable concomitants, or rather its necessary productions, their absence clearly demonstrating the want of the generating principle. May we not hence infer, that wherever faith is seen not in this company, she is an impostor?

Of the great "mysteries of godliness" enumerated by Saint Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, he shows by his arrangement of the five particulars which compose them, that *God believed on in the world* is the climax of this astonishing process.* And it may be deduced from his general writings, that the reason why so many

* 1 Tim. ch. iii.

do not more anxiously labour for eternal happiness is, because they do not practically believe it. The importance of this fundamental principle is so great, that our spiritual enemy is not so perseveringly bent on deterring us from this duty, or detaching us from that virtue, as on shaking the foundations of our faith. He knows if he can undermine this strong hold, slighter impediments will give way. As the first practical instance of human rebellion sprung from unbelief, so all subsequent obedience, to be available, must spring from faith.

Saint Paul shows faith to be a *victorious* principle. There is no other moral quality which can enable us to overcome the world. Faith is the only successful competitor with secular allurement. The world offers things great in human estimation, but it is the property of this grace to make great things look little; it effects this purpose by reducing them to their real dimensions. Nothing but faith can show us the emptiness of this world's glory at the best, because nothing else views it in perpetual contrast with the blessedness of heaven; nothing else can give us such a feeling conviction of its brevity at the longest, as that principle which habitually measures it with eternity. It holds out the only light which shows a Christian that the universe has no bribe worth his acceptance, if it must be obtained at the price of his conscience, at the risk of his soul.

Saint Paul demonstrates in his own instance, that faith is not only a regulating and conquering, but a *transforming* grace. It altered the whole constitution of his mind. It did not dry up the tide of his strong affections, but diverted them into a channel entirely different. To say all in a word, he was a living exemplification of the great Scripture doctrine which he taught — Faith made him, emphatically, *a New Man.*

Thus his life, as well as his writings, proves that faith is an *operating* principle, a strenuous, influential, vigilant grace. If it teach that self-abasement which makes us lowly in our own eyes, it communicates that watchfulness which preserves us from the contamination of sin, a dread of every communication which may pollute. Its disciple is active as well as humble. Love is the instrument by which it works. But that love of God with which it fills the heart, is not maintained there in indolent repose, but quickened for the service of man. Genuine faith does not infuse a piety which is unprofitable to others, but draws it out in incessant desires and aims to promote the general good.

The Apostle knew that the faith of many is rather drowsy than insincere, rather slothful than hypocritical; that they dread the consequences it involves more than the profession it requires. He is therefore always explicit, always mindful to append the effect to the cause. Hence we hear so much from him and the other

apostles of the *fruits* of faith, of adding to faith *virtue*; and it is worthy of remark, that in the roll of Saints, — those Spirits of renown in the ancient church, to which allusion has been made, — the faith of every one is illustrated, not only by some splendid act, but by a life of obedience.

We may talk as holily as Paul himself, and by a delusion not uncommon, by the very holiness of our talk may deceive our own souls; but we may rest assured that where charity is not the dominant grace, faith is not the inspiring principle. Thus, by examining our lives, not our discourse, we shall "prove whether we are in the faith."

Though a genuine faith is peremptory in its decision and resolute in its obedience, yet it deeply feels the source from whence it is derived. In that memorable instance of Abraham's faith, in the very act, instead of valuing himself on the strength of his convictions, *he gave glory to God*; and it is obvious that the reason why faith is selected as the prime condition of our justification, is, because it is a grace which, beyond all others, gives to God the entire glory; that it is the only attribute which subducts nothing for, derives nothing from self. Why are Christian and believer convertible terms, if this living principle be not the ground-work of his character? If, then, it supplies his distinguishing appellation, should it not be his governing spring of action?

Saint Paul is a wonderful instance of the power of this principle. That he should be so entirely carried out of his natural character that he who, by his persecuting spirit, courted the favour of the intolerant Sanhedrim, should be brought to act in direct opposition to their prejudices, supported by no human protection, sustained alone by the grace of Him whom he had so stoutly opposed: that his confidence in God should rise in proportion to his persecutions from man; that the whole bent of his mind should be set directly contrary to his natural propensities, the whole force of his mind and actions be turned in full opposition to his temper, education, society, and habits: that not only his affections should be diverted into a new channel, but that his judgment and understanding should sail in the new-directed current; that his bigotry should be transformed into candour, his fierceness and prejudice to untameable pride into charity, his ignorance into meekness, — can all this be accounted for on any principle inherent in human nature, or any principle uninspired by the Spirit of God?

After this instance, — and, blessed be God, the instance, though superior, is not solitary — the change, though miraculous in this case, is not less certain in others, — shall the doctrine so exemplified continue to be the sport of ridicule? While the scoffing infidel virulently puns the renovation of the human heart merely on a living

with the metamorphoses of Ovid, or the transmigrations of Pythagoras, let not the timid Christian be discouraged; let not his faith be shaken, though he may find that the principle to which he has been taught to trust his eternal happiness is considered as false by him who has not examined into its truth; that the change, of which the sound believer exhibits so convincing an evidence, is derided as absurd by the philosophical sceptic, treated as chimerical by the superficial reasoner, or silently suspected as incredible by the decent moralist.

CHAP. V.

THE MORALITY OF SAINT PAUL.

CHRISTIANITY was a second creation. It completed the first order of things, and introduced a new one of its own, not subversive but perfective of the original. It produced an entire revolution in the condition of man, and accomplished a change in the state of the world, which all its confederated power, wit, and philosophy, not only could not effect, but could not even conceive. It threw such a preponderating weight into the scale of morals, by the superinduction of the new principle of faith in a Redeemer, as rendered the hitherto insupportable trials of the afflicted comparatively light. It gave strength to weakness, spirit to action, motive to virtue, certainty to doubt, patience to suffering, light to darkness, life to death.

It is a rule of Aristotle, that principles and conclusions must always be within the sphere of the same science; that error will be inevitable, while men examine the conclusions of one science by the principles of another. He observes, that it is therefore absurd for a mathematician, whose conclusions ought to be grounded on demonstration, to ground them on the probabilities of the rhetorician.

May not this rule be transferred from the sciences of the schools to the science of morals? Will not the worldly moralist err, by drawing his conclusions as to the morality of a serious Christian from the principles of the worldly school; not being at all able to judge of the principles, of which the religious man's morals are the result?

But in our application of this rule, the converse of the proposition will not hold good; for the real Christian, being aware of the principles of the worldly moralist, expects that his conclusions should grow out of his principles, and in this opinion he seldom errs.

Christian writings have made innumerable converts to morality; but mere moral works have never made one convert to religion. They do not exhibit an originating principle. Morality is not the instrument but the effect of conversion. It cannot say, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But when Christ has given life, then morality, by the activity of the inspiring motive, gives the surest evidence of renovated vitality, and exhibits the most unequivocal symptoms, not only of spiritual life, but of vigorous health.

Saint Paul is sometimes represented not merely as the greatest of the Apostles, — this is readily granted, — but virtually as being almost exclusively great. Is not this just ascrip-

tion of superior excellence, however, not commonly limited to the doctrinal part of his compositions, and is not the consummate moral perfection which both his writings and his character so consistently display, sometimes, if not overlooked, yet placed in the back-ground.

Though he did more for the moral accomplishment of the human character than has ever been effected by any other man; though he laboured more abundantly than any other writer to promote practical religion; yet polemical divinity, on the one side, is too much disposed to claim him as her immediate champion; and then in order to make good her claim, on the other, to assign to him a subordinate station in the ranks of sacred moral writers.

Now the fact is, that all the prophets and apostles, aggregately, are not so abundant in ethical instruction, nor is the detail of moral conduct in any of them so minutely unfolded, or so widely ramified, as in the works of Saint Paul. We may, indeed, venture to assert, that David and our Apostle are almost the only Scripture characters of whom we have such full-length pictures. And for this obvious reason; what was left imperfect in their delineation by their respective historians is completely filled up by their own compositions. The narratives may be said to exhibit their shape and features; their own writings have added the grace of coun-

tenance, the force of expression, and the warmth of colouring.

It furnishes a complete answer to those who oppose the doctrines of grace, on the supposed ground of their encouraging sin; that, as there never was a man who expanded and illustrated those doctrines so fully, so there never was one whose character and compositions exhibit a more consistent and high-toned morality.

Like his sacred precursors, Saint Paul always equally maintains the freeness of grace, and the necessity of holiness. The character of faith is not lowered by insisting that holy practice, which is nothing more than the exercises and consequences of faith, is the sign of its reality. Action, and motion, and speech are not life, but they are the most unequivocal signs of life. Life evidences itself in them; and we do not disparage the principle when we infer its effects, and estimate their value.

We sometimes hear in conversation Saint James set up as the champion of moral virtue against Saint Paul, the bold assertor of doctrines. For these two eminent apostles there has been invented an opposition, which, as it never existed in their minds, cannot be traced in their writings. Without detracting from the perfect ethics of Saint James, may we not be allowed to insist, that Saint Paul, his coadjutor, not his rival, is equally zealous in the inculcation of practice; only running it up more

uniformly into its principle: [illegible] deeply into its radical stock, [illegible] invariably with its motive. It is worth observing, in confirmation of their [illegible] and perfect agreement in sentiment, that Saint Paul and Saint James derive their instance of the principle for which each is contending from the same example, the patriarch Abraham.

So far is Saint Paul from [illegible] virtue, that he expressly decides, "that [illegible] will render to every man according to his deeds." So peremptory is he on this head, that he not only directs men to do good works, but to "maintain" them: so desirous to establish the act into a habit, that they must not only perform them, but be "careful" in the performance. So far from thinking, that, after his conversion, man was to be an inactive recipient of grace, that he not only enjoins us to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord," but assigns the very reason for it—the reception of grace; "forasmuch as ye know that your labour will not be in vain in the Lord." He repeatedly presses on them perseverance, and perseverance is no fanatical symptom. His documents enforce a religion equable, consistent, progressive. The mode of instruction is no fruit of a heated brain, no child of emotion, no vapour of impulse, no effect of fancy.

Not to instance those ample tables of Christian practice, the twelfth of Romans, the fifth of

Thessalonians, the whole Epistle to Titus, and the two last chapters to the Ephesians, — every part of his writings either deduces holy practice from some corresponding principle; or else, after he has been enforcing a system of doctrine, he habitually infers a system of morals growing out of it, inseparable from it. Indeed, throughout the whole of the last-named Epistle, into which the very essence of Gospel doctrines is infused and compressed, all the social, personal, and relative duties are specifically detailed and enjoined; — the affection of husbands, the submission of wives, the tenderness of parents, the obedience of children, the subordination and fidelity of servants, economy of time, hands to be kept from stealing, "a tongue from evil speaking," a body maintained in temperance, soberness, and chastity;" a guarded conversation, a gravity of carriage; — the very decencies of life are all proposed with a minuteness which will scarcely bear a comparison but with his own catalogue of virtues in a kindred Epistle: "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

So far from seeking to subvert the moral law, he takes unwearied pains to confirm it, but he fixes it on its true basis; while he denies its justifying power, he "establishes" its importance as a rule. He vindicates its value, not as a co-

venant for salvation, but as a measure of conduct. In no instance, however light, does he deny the obligation of believers to maintain a steadfast adherence to it, or discountenance a minute observance of it. He shows not only that every sin is to be abandoned, but the contrary virtue adopted: and, though one of the fathers observes, that "a vice sometimes gives place where a virtue does not take it," yet the only certain symptom of the expulsion of a bad quality is the substitution of its opposite. And no man ever more forcibly condemned an empty profession than Saint Paul; no one more severely reprobated a dead faith, no one more unequivocally commended "not the hearers, but the doers of the law."

He proves unanswerably that the doctrine of grace is so far from being hostile to sound practice, that it is the only source from which all legitimate virtue springs;—so far from slackening diligence, that it gives vigour to its activity;—so far from making vigilance superfluous, that its constant language is, *Watch;*—so far from limiting to a favoured few the exhortation, that it makes it universal; "What I say unto you, I say unto *all*—watch!"

In directing his converts to virtuous deeds, he never fails to include the spirit in the act:—they must be *ready* to distribute, *willing* to communicate. He never fails to show, that the characteristic and essence of all goodness is the

desire of pleasing God. In other words, that actions must be the fruit of love to Him. Qualities *merely amiable* are originally without that principle, and possessed even by animals, and possessed in a very high degree, as affection for their offspring, fidelity to their masters, gratitude to their benefactors.

Saint Paul, like his blessed Lord, is never so emphatically indignant against any of the signs of hypocrisy in professors, as against sinful practice. Like him he is frequent in the enumeration of vices which he solemnly proclaims amount to an exclusion from heaven. Holy practice is indeed the only sign to the world of the sincerity of a Christian, and in a good measure is a sign to himself. It is the principal evidence which will precede the retributive sentence at the last day. Saint Paul therefore calls that day "the *revelation* of the righteous judgment of God." He does not call it the day of his forming the judgment, but of his declaring it. God, who witnessed the act when it was done, and the motive which impelled it, wants himself no such evidence to assist his decision, but he uses it to manifest to men and angels his own strict justice. "In that awful day," says an eminent divine, "the Judge will not examine men as to their experiences, he will not set every one to tell the story of his conversion, but he will bring forth his works." *

* Edwards on Religious Affections.

How acceptable, even in the ears of the most thoughtless, would that proclamation sound, *the grace of God bringeth salvation*, were it unaccompanied by the moral power ascribed to it, that of teaching us to deny our sensual appetites! How many would give a cheap assent to the principle, were it not clogged with such an encumbering consequence! Those who insist, that our salvation is effected by works, would gladly adopt faith as a speculative notion, instead of the inconvenient evidences which this self-denying grace involves.

One would imagine, that some who so loudly insist that we shall be saved by works, must mean works of supererogation, and that they depended for salvation on the transfer of the superfluity of the merits of others to themselves; for it is remarkable, that *they* trust their future bliss most confidently to good works, who have the slenderest portion of their own to produce.

The Apostle is perpetually combating the fatal doctrine of those who insinuate that the freedom of the Gospel is a freedom from moral restraint. He describes it, indeed, as a deliverance from the sentence, but not from the precepts, of the law. No one ever more unremittingly opposed those who represent the constant inculcation of holy practice as an infringement of the liberty of a Christian. He perpetually demonstrates the necessity of a determinate rule of duty, without which even that love, which is

sometimes pleaded as an apology for the neglect of duty, — that love, which is, indeed, the genuine source of all acceptable performance, — might be lowered into a vagrant, indefinite, disorderly principle. A religion, destitute of faith and love, is not the religion of Christ; a religion which furnishes no certain standard of conduct, is not the religion of the Gospel.

Saint Paul accordingly animadverts severely on those who presume to convert the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, into a pretence for licentious conduct. He strenuously refutes the charge, by intimating that the New Covenant enforces holiness of life, even more than the Old, and enforces it on more engaging motives. The Law deters from sin by denunciations: the Gospel invites to goodness by the most winning persuasions; God so *loved* the world, that he gave his Son to save it. The Law shows man the danger of sin, and pronounces its punishment: the Gospel performs the higher act of love, it delivers him from its power. It is a quality ascribed to the love of Christ, that it "constraineth;" it compels us, as it were, to be compassionate. What can make us so tender to others as the experience of God's goodness to ourselves? Who is so ready to show mercy as he who has received it?

Saint Paul derives all duties from this love of God in Christ as their foundation. All the motives to right action, all the arguments for

holiness of life, are drawn from this source; all the lines of duty converge to this centre. If Saint Paul censures, he points to this only spring of hope; if he laments, he turns to this only true consolation; if he insists that the *Grace of God hath appeared*, he points to its practical object, "teaching us to live soberly, righteously, and godlily." When he determines to know nothing but his Saviour, and even Him under the degrading circumstance of crucifixion, he includes in that knowledge all the religious and moral benefits of which it is susceptible.

They who contend that the Gospel is only a scheme of morals, struggle hard to keep down the compact to their own depressed standard. They will not allow of a grain or a scruple "beyond the bond," but insist, that whatever is not specifically commanded is superfluous; what is above their own pitch is unnecessary. If they allow that it is sublime, they insist that it is impracticable. If they allow that the *love*, *peace*, and *joy* of the Apostle are desirable, they do not desire them as *fruits of the Spirit*, as signs of acceptance. The interior principle, those views which take in the very depths of the heart, as well as the surface of life, — any practical use of these penetrating truths, they consider as something which the enthusiastic reader does not find, but make.

The mere social and political virtues are made for this world. Here they have their origin, their use, and their reward. All the motives to virtuous practice, not derived from the hope of future blessedness, will be inefficient. There is no powerful obligation to "perfect holiness" to those who do not perfect it in the fear "of God." Grace will not thrive abundantly in that heart which does not believe it to be the seed of glory.

The moralist of our Apostle is not merely a man possessed of agreeable qualities, of some social and civil virtues, of generosity and good nature, — qualities excellent as far as they go, and which, as a mean to the good order of society, can scarcely be too much valued; — but these qualities a man may possess, without having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, without desiring "to live for him who died for him." Such qualities will gain him credit, but that very credit may endanger his salvation, if worldly esteem make him rest satisfied, without the "honour which cometh from God." The purity, sublimity, and consistency of Saint Paul's requirements every where manifest that his moral man is not merely a disciple of Antoninus or Epictetus, but a liege subject of the Messiah's spiritual kingdom.

Paul invariably shows, that the humbling doctrines of the Cross are so far from lowering the tone of moral obligation, that they raise the

standard of practical virtue to an elevation totally unknown under any other mode of instruction. But there is a tendency in the heart of man, in his natural state, to rebel against these doctrines, even while he professes himself an advocate for virtue; to set up the virtue which he presumes that he possesses against religion, to which he is chiefly hostile for the very elevation which it gives to virtue: this, more than the doctrines, and even than the mysteries of revelation, is the real cause of his hostility.

We have known persons, when pressed on the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, think to get rid of the argument, by declaring that they did not pretend to understand Saint Paul; that, for their part, they were quite satisfied with Micah's religion: "To do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God," was enough for them. In what they call this comfortable, and reasonable, and practicable scheme of religion, they are little aware what strictness is involved, what integrity, what charity, what holiness! They little think how nearly the Prophet's religion approached that of the Apostle. There is, in fact, no difference between them, but such as necessarily arises out of the two dispensations under which they lived. To walk humbly with God, we must believe in the revelation of his Son, and, consequently, adopt the principles he enjoins, we must adopt every doctrine, and believe every mystery. To walk

humbly with God is a principle which stretches to the bounds of the whole universe of revelation.

More men are indebted to Christianity for their morality than are willing to confess the obligation. It communicates a secret and unacknowledged infection. Living under a public recognition of Christianity, under Christian laws, and in Christian society, causes many a proud heart to believe more than it cares to own, and to do more good than the man is willing to ascribe to the faith which, if it does not actually influence *his* mind, has made right actions so common, that not to do them is dishonourable. Others, who do not appear to live under the direct illumination of the Gospel, have yet the benefit of its refracted rays, which, if the conveyance is too imperfect to communicate religious warmth, yet diffuses sufficient light to point the way to many moral duties.

We are apt to call men good, because they are without certain bad qualities. But this is not only not knowing religion, it is not knowing human nature. All vices are not affinities; of course the very indulgence of one vice is not seldom an exclusion of another, as covetousness avoids profligacy, and ambition expels indolence; but though they are natural antipathies, they all spring from the same source; the same fountain of corrupt nature feeds both.

Nor does the goodness of Saint Paul's moral man consist merely in abstaining from wicked actions; nor merely in filling the external duties of his profession. While he is active in business, he must be fervent in spirit. While transacting the ordinary affairs of life, he must be serving the Lord. In worldly moralists, the excessive pursuit of business, as well as of pleasure, leaves a clinging to it in the thoughts, an almost exclusive attachment to it in the heart, long after the actual engagement has ceased: the hankering mind continues to act over again the scenes of its interest, of its ambition, or of its amusement.

Again, the worldly moralist, while he practises some virtues, is indifferent to others. He is temperate, perhaps, but he is ambitious. He is diligent, but he is sordid. Whereas Christian morality, as taught by Saint Paul, hangs as it were in clusters: every virtue issuing from *his* principles touches on other virtues at so many points, that no man possesses one in perfection who does not possess many, who does not at least desire to possess all; while the Divine Spirit, pervading like the sap every fibre of the soul, strengthens the connection of its graces, and infuses holy aims into the whole character.

We have employed the term *morality* in compliance with common usage; but adopted in the worldly sense, it gives but an imperfect idea of the Apostle's meaning. His preceptive

passages are encircled with a kind of glory; they are illuminated with a beam from heaven; they proceed from the Spirit of God, and are produced by faith in Him. There is every where that beautiful intermixture of motive and action, that union of the cause and the effect, the faith and its fruits, that uniform balance of the principle and the produce, which render these Epistles an exhaustless treasury of practical wisdom, as well as an imperishable record of Divine Grace.

Saint Paul every where runs up the stream to the spring. The government he inculcates is spiritual. Not content to recommend the obedience of the life, he brings the very thoughts and desires under control. He traces up the act to the temper which produces it. He dwells more on the *spirit* of the world than on its actual offences. He knew that many would reprobate bad actions, who do not seek that spirit which would prevent their generating. He knew that men judge soundly enough on questions in which they have no bias from interest or appetite. For one who believes that to be "carnally minded is death," twenty believe in the miraculous gift of tongues, and even in the doctrine of the Trinity, because they fancy that neither of these trenches on their purse, or their pleasure, or their vain projects.

What Saint Paul calls "doing by nature the things contained in the law," and "a man

being a law unto himself," we frequently see illustrated in some well-bred and highly-cultivated minds. They have a strong sense of honour and integrity; to this sense their credit and their comfort require they should live up. The natural make of their mind, perhaps, is liberal; from education they have imbibed noble sentiments; they have adopted a system of equity which they would think it dishonourable to violate; they are generous and humane; but in matters of self-indulgence they are not scrupulous; in subduing their inclinations, in abstinence from some one governing desire or impetuous appetite, — in all this they come short; to all this their rule does not extend. Their conduct, therefore, though amiable, and useful, and creditable, yet is not the "obedience of faith;" these good qualities might have been exercised had Christianity never existed; this is not bringing the practice, much less *the thoughts, into the captivity of Christ.* The man is a law unto himself, and acts consistently enough with this self-imposed legislation.

Even if no religion had ever existed, if a Deity did not exist, — for the reference is not to religion, not to the will of the Deity, — such morality would be acceptable to society, because to society it is profitable But how can any action be pleasing to God in which there is no purpose of pleasing him? How can any con-

duct be acceptable to God, to whom it renders no homage, to whom it gives no glory?

Scripture abounds with every motive to obedience, both rational and spiritual. But it would achieve but half its work had it stopped there. As peccable creatures, we require not only inducements to obedience, but a heart, and a power, and a will to obey; assistance is as necessary as motives; power as indispensable as precept; — all which requisites are not only promised by the Word, but conferred by the Spirit of God.

CHAP. VI.

THE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF SAINT PAUL.

THE perfection of the Christian character does not so much consist in this excellence, or that talent, or the other virtue; in the performance of some right action, or the abstinence from some wrong one, as in *the determination of the whole soul for God.* This generous surrender of self, whether of the sensual or of the intellectual self, is the unequivocal test of a heart consecrated by man to his Maker. He has no by-ends, no secret reserves. His intention is single, his way is straightforward; he keeps his end in view without deflection, and he pursues it without weariness.

Saint Paul and his associates were the first moral instructors who preached not themselves. Perhaps there is scarcely a more striking proof of the grandeur of his spirit, than his indifference to popularity. This is an elevation of character, which not only no Pagan sage has reached, but which not every Christian teacher has been found to attain.

This successful Apostle was so far from placing himself at the head of a sect, that he took pains to avoid it. In some subsequent instructors,

this vanity was probably the first seed of heresy; the sound of Ebionites and Marcionites would as much gratify the ear of the founders, as bringing over proselytes to their opinions would delight their feelings. Saint Paul would have rejected with horror any such distinction. He who earnestly sought to glorify his Master would naturally abase himself. With a holy indignation he asks, "What then is Paul, and what is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" He points out to them the littleness of such exclusive fondness in men, who had such great objects in view — "overvalue not Paul or Apollos as yours, *for all things are yours.*"

It is impossible not to stop a moment, in order to notice the fine structure of the period to which these words are an introduction. It would be difficult to find a more finished climax: "Let no man glory in men; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; or the world, or life, or death; or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." *

Knowing the proneness of human nature to this party-spirit, he takes pains to prevent excessive individual attachments. There is no instance of a man so distinguished, so little distinguishing himself. He chooses to merge himself in the general cause, to sink himself in the mass of faithful ministers. This is par-

* 1 Cor. iii. 22.

ticularly evident in the beginning of many of his Epistles, by his humility in attaching to his own some name of far inferior note, as his associate in the work; "Paul and Sosthenes" — "Paul "and Sylvanus" — "Timotheus our brother;" — and in writing to the Thessalonians, he connects both the latter names with his own.

He laboured to make the people bear in mind that the apostles were the disseminators, not the authors, of the faith which they preached. Miraculous as his conversion had been, superior as were his endowments, favoured as he was by Divine inspiration, he not only did not assume, but he rejected, any distinction, and only included himself among the teachers of their common Christianity. Thus he bequeathed to his successors a standing pattern of humility, and of the duty of ascribing their talents, their application, and their success, to Him, from whom, whatever advantages they possess, are derived.

Saint Paul did not rank, on the one hand, with those liberal modern philosophers, who assert that virtue is its own reward; nor, on the other, with those abstracted mystics, who profess an unnatural disinterestedness, and a superhuman disdain of any recompense but that which they find in the pure love of God. He was not above accepting heaven, not for any works of righteousness which he had done, but as the free gift of God through the right-

eousness that had been wrought for him. He was not too proud and independent to confess, that the nearness of heavenly glory was with him a most animating principle.

This hope cheered his fainting spirit; this prospect not only regulated, but almost annihilated his sense of suffering. Invisible things were made so clear to the eye of faith; remote things were brought so near to one, who always kept up in his mind a comparative estimate of the brevity of this afflicted life with the duration of eternal happiness; faith so made the future present; love so made the labour light; the earnest of the Spirit was given him in such a measure, that mortality seemed, even here, to be swallowed up of life. His full belief in the immediate presence of God in that world in which he was assured that light, purity, holiness, and happiness would be enjoyed in their most consummate perfection, not only sustained his hope but exhilarated his heart.

If it does not support *us* under our inferior trials in the same manner, it is because we have rather a nominal than a practical faith, rather an assenting than an obeying conviction; it is because our eyes are not fixed on the same objects, nor our hearts warmed with the same affections; it is because our attention is directed so sparingly to that Being, and to that state, to which his was supremely devoted. Ought we to complain, that we enjoy not the same sup-

ports, nor the same consolations, while we do not put ourselves in the same way to obtain them?

But though Saint Paul was no disciple of that metaphysical theology, which makes such untaught distinctions, as to separate our love of God from any regard to our own beatitude; though he might have been considered as a selfish man, by either of the classes to whom allusion has been made, yet true disinterestedness was eminently his characteristic. Another instance of a human being so entirely devoid of selfishness, one who never took his own ease, or advantage, or safety, or credit into the account, cannot be found. If he considered his own sufferings, he considered them for the sake of his friends. "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." The only joy he seemed to derive, when he was pressed out of measure, above strength, was, that others might be comforted and encouraged by his sufferings. So also of his consolations; the principal joy which he derived from them was, that others might be animated by them. This anxiety for the proficiency of his converts, in preference to his own safety; his disposition to regard every object in due subjection to the great design of his ministry; his humble, vigilant care, while exulting in the hope of an eternal crown, that he might "not himself be cast away;" — form, in combination with the

rest of his conduct, a character which we must allow has not only no superior, but no parallel among men.

The union of generosity and self-denial — and without the one the other is imperfect — was peculiarly exemplified in our apostle. His high-minded independence on man had nothing of the monkish pride of poverty, for he knew "how to abound;" nor was it the worldly pusillanimous dread of it, for he "knew how to want."

In vindicating the right of the ecclesiastical body to an equitable provision, as a just requital of their labours, he nobly renounces all claim to any participation for himself. "*I have used none of these things!*" This wise and dignified abstinence in the original formation of a church, which must be founded, before provisions can be made for its continuance, while it maintained the dignity of his own disinterestedness, enabled him with the better grace, and more powerful effect, to plead the legitimate claims of her ministers; and to insist, that it was the duty of the people to supply their temporal things to those from whom they received their spiritual things. While he himself refused to claim emolument, lest it should be made a pretence for hindering the Gospel, he yet looked forward with an eye of kindness and justice, in thus stipulating, as it were, for the comfort of Christian ministers to the end of the world.

In a long expostulatory argument, illustrated by a variety of analogous instances, he shows the propriety of a provision being made for those who dedicated themselves to the spiritual instruction of others: — the warrior engaged in the defence of his country is supported at the public expense; the planter by the produce of his vineyard; the feeder of a flock by the milk of his flock; the agriculturist by the profits of his plough. He strengthens his argument by an allusion to a humane practice in the old law, by which even the ox was allowed to participate in that plenty which his labour assisted to procure; then, by a sudden generous interjection, — "Doth God take care for oxen?" — he intimates that this provision of mercy for the beast was emblamatical of this justice, — for it scarcely amounted to mercy,— which ought to secure to every minister a fair remuneration for the sacrifice he has made of ease and profit, by addicting himself to the service of the altar.*

After, however, having declared that he renounced all reward for himself, fearing that this assurance might be construed into an insinuation of his wish to receive the emolument which he pretended to refuse, with a noble disdain of so mean an expedient, he protests that it would be better for him to die of want, rather than, by receiving pecuniary recompense, to

* 1 Cor. ix.

rob himself of his honest claim to the consciousness of disinterested services.

Saint Paul's conduct in these instances affords something of the same fine climax in action, with that which Jesus expressed in words, when he sent to the Baptist the proofs of his divinity. After enumerating his miracles of love, he closes with declaring, as the highest possible instance of that love, *that the Gospel was preached* — but to what class? — to the poor! From the words of Christ, turn to the life of Paul. The persecution of his enemies, the fatigue of his travels, the falsehood of his brethren, the labour of instructing so many nations, of converting so many cities, of founding so many churches — what is his relaxation from such labours, what his refreshment from such perils, what his descent from such heights? — Working with his own hands for his daily bread, and for the relief of the poor. The profane critic may call this the art of sinking, the Christian will deem it the noblest point of elevation. Might not the Apostle well say, "Be ye followers of "me, as I am of Christ."

How has the world stood in just admiration of the generous conduct of Cincinnatus! Tired with the hardships of war, and satiated with the glories of conquest, he very rationally, and (as he refused all reward) it must be owned very disinterestedly, withdrew to his country-house, from which he had been reluctantly torn. He

withdrew to enjoy, in the bosom of his family, the advantages of agriculture and the pleasures of retirement. To such a retreat Paul would have flown with delight, had he not known that, for him, it was not a duty. He, unlike the Dictator, had no intervals of unmolested calm; it was not in the quiet of repose, but in the very midst of perils and of persecutions, that he laboured for his own support.

It cannot be denied, that his whole consistent practice furnished this sure criterion of a faithful minister, — that he enjoined no self-denial, preached no mortification, recommended no exertion to others, of which he gave not himself a shining example. While he pointed out to his associates the duty of "approving themselves ministers of God in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses," he was not himself *lying on a bed of roses;* he was not making light of sorrows, of which he was not personally partaking; he did not deal out orders for the patient endurance of sufferings, the bitterness of which he had not tasted. He had largely shared in the stripes and imprisonments which it was possible some of his followers might be speedily called to endure.

At the same time, he furnishes them with cautions drawn from his own invariable prudence, when he exhorted them to *give no offence.* This was not altogether to avoid personal discredit, though that should be carefully guarded

against, so much as to preserve the character of religion itself from the obloquy she would sustain from the faults of her disciples. His great object why *the ministry should not be blamed* was, because he knew how ineffectual all teaching would be rendered, if the teacher committed the faults he reprehended, or even exercised a religious vocation in an imprudent manner.

In another place, after recapitulating some of the hardships which himself and his companions were suffering, up to the very moment when he was describing them, — their hunger and thirst, their nakedness and buffeting, deprived of domestic comforts, destitute of a settled home; having shown what was their treatment, he proceeds to show what was their temper under it: — *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.* This is indeed practical Christianity!

After enumerating the trials to which they may be exposed, he sets over-against them a catalogue of the qualities by which they should be distinguished, — *pureness, knowledge, kindness;* thus encouraging them to patience by the integrity of their motives; and to the adornment of their calling, by the skilfulness and affection with which they exercised it. He tempers their sorrows, and mitigates their difficulties, by interspersing with the recital those Divine consolations, from which alone genuine cheerfulness in suffering can be derived.

In this enumeration he had not to rack his invention for precedents; he had only to make a transcript of the state of his own mind, and the tenor of his own practice, to give them a complete delineation of the ministerial character. While he encourages them to perseverance by the success which might attend their labours, he prepares them also to expect reproach; mingling *good and evil report* as the probable lot of every devoted servant of Christ.

When he was setting out from Ephesus * to Jerusalem, "bound in the spirit, not knowing the things that should befall him," the indefinite yet certain anticipation of calamity which he expressed, might have been interpreted into the pusillanimous forebodings of his own apprehensive mind: he guards against this suspicion by informing us, it was by the unerring inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he was assured "that bonds and afflictions awaited him;" so that he knew infallibly, wherever he went, it was only a change of place, not of peril, to which he was proceeding. Yet was this conviction, so far from arresting his purpose, so far from inclining him to hesitate, or not to persist in the path of duty because it was the path of danger, that his mighty faith converted duty into choice, elevated danger into joy. — Hear his triumphant proclamation: "But none of these things move me,

* Acts, xx.

neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

It is not the nature of Christianity to convert a man of sense into a driveller; if it make him self-abased in the sight of God, and in his own eyes, it does not oblige him to a renunciation of his just claims in civil society, nor to a base abjection in the sight of men. He is not desirous of honours which do not belong to him, but he does not despise those to which he has a lawful claim. The character of Saint Paul, like the religion he taught, is manly, rational, ingenuous.

This combination of dignity with humility he uniformly presents to us. He always humbles, but never disparages himself. He, who on one occasion was "the least of all saints," was, on another, "not a whit behind the chiefest of them." He, that was "not worthy to be called an apostle," would yet "magnify his apostleship." He, who would patiently endure injury and reproach, yet refused to be scourged contrary to law. He, who was illegally imprisoned at Philippi,* accepted not deliverance till the magistrates themselves came in person to release him, — a resolution not only due to his own innocence, but probably intended also

* Acts, xvi.

to render the magistrates afraid of proceeding unjustly against other Christians. He, who could submit to live by the labour of his own hands, and to receive charity in his sickness, would yet vindicate his civil title to respect, and not only urge his right of Roman citizenship, but press his peculiar ground of superiority over the officer who would have contended with him, by declaring that his own freedom was not a purchase, but an inheritance. He, who determined to know nothing "but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," could assert, when it became proper, his liberal education under a master in Israel. He, who was now lying at the foot of the Cross, avowed that he had been bred at the feet of Gamaliel. He, who was beating down the pride of "gifts" in the assuming Corinthians, scrupled not to declare his own superiority in this very article, yet with an exclusive ascription of the gift to the Giver, — "I thank my God, that I speak with tongues more than you all."

To those who understand what Bishop Horsley calls "the paradoxes of Christianity," it will be perfectly intelligible, that one, who was so feelingly alive to the perception of sin, as to deplore that "when he would do good, evil was present with him," could also, in the integrity of his heart, boldly appeal to the Thessalonians for the purity of his own conduct and that of his companions — "You know how holily, and

justly, and unblamably we have lived among you."

He was aware that contentions about practices and opinions comparatively insignifiant, were generally the most vehemently and uncharitably carried on by men who are the most cold and indifferent in the defence of truths of the most awful moment. Inflexible himself in every thing which was of vital importance, yet accommodating in trivial matters, about which men of narrow views pertinaciously contend, he shaped the course of his usefulness to the winding current of life, and the flexure of circumstances; and was ever on the watch to see how, by giving way in things indifferent, he might gain men to the great cause which he lived only to promote.

Never was any sentiment more completely perverted, than that which is so expressive of the condescension that distinguishes his character, — *I am all things to all men.* The Latitudinarian in principle or in morals, who would scorn to consider Paul's authority as paramount on any other occasion, eagerly pleads this text to justify his own accommodation to every thing that is tempting in interest, or seductive in appetite. This sentiment, which proceeded from a candour the most amiable, was, in the Apostle, always governed by an integrity the most unbending.

To what purpose did he make use of this

maxim? — "That he might by all means save some." Let those who justify its adoption by the sanction of Saint Paul employ it to the same end to which he employed it. But is it not frequently carried to a conceding length, to which he would never have carried it, to answer *any* purpose; and is not the end itself often such as he would not have sought, even by the best means? To the perversion of this sentiment the fashionable doctrine of expediency may be imputed, — a doctrine not more corrupt in its principle, and dangerous in its results, than opposite to the whole bent and current of the Apostle's views, as developed in his writings and in his practice.

That hollow maxim, of *doing evil that good may come*, had indeed been adopted by some of the wisest pagan legislators. Not only the prudent Numa pretended to Divine communications with his inspiring goddess, in order that his laws might be received with more reverence; even the open-hearted conqueror of Carthage used to enter the Capitol alone, under pretence of consulting the gods, that whatever enterprises he wished to recommend to the people, they might believe them to be directed and approved by their deities. But nothing impedes the march of truth more than the offered assistance of falsehood. Nothing is more injurious to a good cause, than the attempt to help it forward with fictitious or even doubtful additions. Some of

the best cases, — cases corroborated by a thousand indubitable facts, — have been injured for a time, by the detection of petty instances of misrepresentation, or mistake, or aggravation in ill-judging advocates.

After the example of the illustrious Romans above recited, but with far less excuse, even some weak Christians, in the second century, fancying that deceit might succeed where truth had failed, attempted by forgery to supply the deficiencies of Scripture. Spurious Sibylline verses, under the reign of one of the Antonines, were imposed by fraud upon folly, as prophecies of Christ, pretending to be as old as the Deluge. The attempt to mend perfection never answers.

To these political impostures what a contrast does Saint Paul exhibit at once in his writings and his life! — In his writings he declares, in one short sentence, of all such principles, "their condemnation is just." In his life he *suffered* evil to extremity, that good might be produced; but never, under the most alluring pretence, *did* evil, or connived at it. He drew in no convert, by displaying only the pleasant side of Christianity. To bring forward the doctrines of the Cross was his first object; though, since his time, to keep them out of sight has sometimes been thought a more prudent measure. But the political wisdom of the jesuitical missionaries failed as completely as the simple integrity of the Apostle succeeded.

His arguments, it is true, were powerful, his motives attractive; but he never shrunk from the avowal, that they were drawn wholly from things unseen, future, eternal. "To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his holy angels." — "If we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together." — "The sufferings of the present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." And in this view he is not afraid to speak of suffering, as a favour connected with faith. It is *given* unto them, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also to *suffer* for his sake.

How powerful must have been the convictions of his faith, and the integrity of his heart, which could not only conquer prejudices the most inveterate, but could lead him to renounce every prospect of riches and power, fame and distinction, — objects which were likely to have taken deep hold on a temper so fervent, a genius so active! He knew that the cause he was embracing would defeat all such expectations. He possibly might have advanced his fortune, certainly his reputation, under his Jewish masters, had he pursued those practices in which he was so hotly engaged, when he was *so exceedingly mad against the Church of God.*

What was the use which, in his new character, he made of his natural advantages? It was

the same which he made of his supernatural graces. Did the one induce intellectual pride? Did the other inspire spiritual self-sufficiency? Was it his aim to exalt the accomplished preacher? Was it not his only endeavour to magnify the crucified Saviour? He sought no civil power, courted no ecclesiastical supremacy. He conferred honour on Episcopacy by ordaining bishops, but took no rank himself. He intermeddled with no party. All his interference with governments was to teach the people to obey them.

He had nothing to bias him at the time of his conversion, any more than afterwards. He embraced Christianity when at the height of its discredit: in defending it, he was influenced neither by the obstinacy of supporting a preconceived opinion, nor the private motive of personal attachment. As he had not been a follower nor an acquaintance of Jesus, he had never been buoyed up with the hope of a place in his expected temporal kingdom. Had this been the case, mere pride and pertinacity, in so strong a character, might have led him to adhere to the falling cause, lest by deserting it he might be accused of disappointment in his hopes, or pusillanimity in his temper. Was it probable, then, that on any lower principle he would encounter every hazard, sacrifice every hope, annihilate every possibility of preferment, for the cause of a man, after his ignominious death,

whom he had so fiercely opposed, when the danger was less alarming, and the hope less uncertain?

His strong faith was fortified by those trials which would have subdued a weak one. His zeal increased with the darkness of his earthly prospects. What were his inducements? The glory of God. What was his reward? Bonds and imprisonment. When arrived at any fresh scene of peril, did he smooth his language to secure his safety? Did he soften an unpalatable truth to attract upon false grounds? Did he practise any artifice to swell the catalogue of his proselytes? Did he take advantage of ignorance and idolatry, when acclamations met him? Did he court popularity when he refused Divine honours? Did he not prefer his Master's crown of thorns to the garlands with which the priests of Jupiter would have crowned him? Is it not observable that this offer of deification disturbed the serenity of his spirit more than all his injuries had done?*

Two remarks arise out of this circumstance. How little is popular acclamation any proof of the comparative excellence of the objects of acclaim; and how little is genuine grandeur of soul elated by it! Our blessed Lord, after all his miraculous deeds, deeds as full of mercy as of power, — deeds repeatedly performed in his

* Acts, xiv.

own country, and before the same spectators, —never had Divine honours paid him. While, for a single cure, Paul and his companions were instantly deified, though they rejected the homage with a holy indignation. Nothing could more fully prove their deep humility than that they bore the abuse and ill-treatment of the people with meekness; but when they would have worshipped them, "they rent their clothes."

In fine, no principle short of the faith described by our apostle in the eleventh of Hebrews, could have enabled him to sustain, with such heroic firmness, the diversified sufferings alluded to in the twelfth of the second of Corinthians. Nothing short of that Divine support could have produced a disinterestedness so pure, a devotedness so sublime.

The afflictions of the saints serve to prove the distinguishing character of God's favour. The grace so eminently afforded to this apostle exempted him neither from sorrow nor suffering, nor dangers, nor calumny, nor poverty, nor a violent death. That its results were in the opposite direction, shows at once the intrinsic nature of the Divine favour, and the spirit in which it is received and acted upon by sincere Christians.

CHAP. VII.

SAINT PAUL'S PRUDENCE IN HIS CONDUCT TOWARDS THE JEWS.

THE judgment of Saint Paul is remarkably manifest in the juxta-position of things. In opening his Epistle to his converts at Rome, among whom were many Jews for whose benefit he wrote, he paints the moral character of that Pagan capital in the darkest colours. The fidelity of his gloomy picture is corroborated by an almost contemporary historian*, who, though a Pagan and a countryman, paints it in still blacker shades, and without the decorum observed by Saint Paul.

The representation here made of Roman vice would be in itself sufficiently pleasing to the Jew; and it would be more so, when we observe, what is most worthy of observation, the nature of the charges brought against the Romans. As if the wisdom of God had been desirous of vindicating itself by the lips of Paul in the eyes of his own countrymen the Jews, the vices charged upon the Romans are exactly those which stand in opposition to the spirit of some one injunction of the Decalogue. Now,

* Suetonius.

though the heathen writers were unacquainted with this code, yet the spontaneous breach of its statutes proved most clearly these statutes to have been suggested by the most correct foreknowledge of the evil propensities of our common nature. The universal violation of the law, even by those who knew it not, manifested the omniscience of the Lawgiver.

And, let it be further remarked in this connection, that no exceptions could be taken against the justice of God, for animadverting on the breach of a law which was not known; inasmuch as, so faithful was the law of Mount Sinai to the law of conscience, the revealed to the natural code of morals, that the Romans in offending one had offended both; in breaking unwittingly the Decalogue, they had knowingly rebelled against the law of conscience; they had sinned against the light of nature; they had stifled the suggestions of their better judgment; they had consciously abused natural mercies; they had confounded the distinctions of good and evil, of which they were not insensible. "Their conscience bore them witness" that they violated many obvious duties, so that "even these were without excuse."

The unconverted Jews would doubtless, then, feel no small pleasure in contemplating this hideous portrait of human crimes as without excuse, and would naturally be tempted, with their usual self-complacency, to turn it to their

own advantage, and boastfully to thank God that they were not like other men, or even like these Romans.

To check this unbecoming exultation, the Apostle, with admirable dexterity, in the very next chapter * begins to pull down their high conceits. He presents them with a frightful picture of themselves, drawn from the life, and aggravated by a display of that superior light and knowledge which rendered their immoralities far more inexcusable. To the catalogue of the vices which he had reprehended in the others, he adds that of self-sufficiency, arrogance, and harsh judgment, which formed so disgusting a feature in the Pharisaic character. Paul in this point shows the equity of distributive justice. The Jews had sinned, not only against the law they knew, but the law they venerated. They rested in the law, not with gratitude for the distinction, but with security in the privilege; and they were ruined, he suggests, by a vain confidence in those external advantages which would have been their glory, had not privileges been converted into a substitute for piety. What apology should he now offer for the sins of the chosen nation, the peculiar people, the possessors and the boasters of the law, distinguished, not only by having received, but by being the hereditary, exclusive proprietors

* Romans, ii.

of the Divine Oracles? Thus, while he convicts his own nation, he gives an awful lesson to posterity of the vanity of forms and profession; that it is not possessing, nor dispersing, the Bible that will carry men to heaven, but only as they individually believe its doctrines, submit to its authority, and conform to its precepts. The Apostle reminds them, that it is not the knowledge of God's will, which they possessed; nor the approbation of "things that are excellent," which they manifested; nor their confident ambition of teaching others; nor their skill to guide the blind; nor the form of knowledge; nor the letter of the law, which could avail without personal holiness.

After this severe reproof, for doing themselves the wrong things they censured, and for not doing the right things they taught, he suddenly turns upon them with a rapid succession of interrogatories respecting their own practice; personally applying each distinct subject of their instruction of others, to each distinct failure of their own, in those very points of conduct on which they insisted; proving upon them, that through this glaring inconsistency, "the name of God was blasphemed among unbelievers."

Thus he demonstrates that the Jew and the Gentile stand on the same level with regard to their definitive sentence, each being to be judged according to their respective law. Nay, the

conscientious Pagan will find more favour than the immoral Jew. Profession will not justify, but aggravate offence. Men, indeed, may see our exactness in forms and observances, and will justly commend what is in itself commendable; but as they cannot discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, they may admire as piety what is at worst hypocrisy, and at best but form. But of the sincere Jew he declares, as we may also of the sincere Christian, he is a Jew who *is one inwardly, not in the letter, but in the heart and the spirit, whose praise is not of men but of God.*

By the august simplicity and incontrovertible reasoning of this Epistle to Rome, and by the supernatural power which accompanied it, he brought down the arrogance of human ability from its loftiest heights, subdued the pride of philosophy in its strong holds, and superseded the theology, without aiming at the splendour, of the most amiable and eloquent of all the Romans, in his admired work on the "Nature of the Gods." By one short address to that city, written in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, he "destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Knowing that pride was the dominant disposition of his own countrymen, he loses no occasion of attacking this master sin, and frequently intimates how ill it became such an

insignificant and perverse people to arrogate to themselves a superiority for which, though their advantages furnished them with means, their practice furnished them with no shadow of pretence. He questions what right they had to expect the monopoly of God's favour; and asks, with a mixture of irony and indignation, "Is he the God of the Jews only?" Is the whole human race to be abandoned to eternal darkness, and the illumination of Divine mercy confined to your narrow society? Shall God falsify his declaration, that "his tender mercies are over *all* his works," to gratify a party spirit, and grant a partial salvation?

In descanting on this subject, Saint Paul used none of the cant, but displayed all the kindness, of liberality. Speaking of the Jews, "he bears them record that they had a zeal for God;" but instantly his veracity obliged him to qualify his candour, by lamenting that their zeal was not regulated by knowledge. Their perverseness rather increased his desire of serving them, than drove him into a hopeless indifference; their provocations grieved, but neither silenced nor exasperated him.

It was the high destiny of this distinguished apostle, that he was to be the honoured instrument of enlarging, to an indefinite extent, the hitherto contracted pale of Christianity. The law of Moses had been committed to one single people, and it was one of the conditions of that

law, that they to whom it was given were interdicted from any free intercourse with the rest of the world. A larger heart and a higher mind than those of Paul could not have been found for the new and expanded service. Christianity, through him, opened wide her liberal arms, broke through the narrow barrier, and carried her unconditional offers of boundless emancipation to every captive of sin and ignorance throughout all the kingdoms of the world.

But though Paul's original designation was, that he should be the Apostle of the Gentiles; though his labours were to be more especially consecrated to that innumerable mass to whom the narrow-minded Jews grudged the very chance of access to Heaven; yet wherever he came he showed this mark of regard, that he opened his first public instructions in the Jewish synagogue, referring the hearers in his discourses to their own prophets, as he did his Pagan auditors to their own authors.

It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to the Jews, they being the depositaries of the antecedent revelations made by the Almighty; which revelations being preparatory to the introduction of the Gospel, and abounding with prophetic intimations of the Messiah; if the Jews should accept the new revelation as the completion of the old, it would largely contribute to convince the heathen that Christianity was in truth a Divine institution.

The annals of the Jews, insulated as they had been as a people, had become, by Divine appointment, connected with the history of other nations. Their captivity had brought them into contact with Persia and Babylon. As they always continued a commercial people, they had, after their dispersion, by their extensive traffic, carried their religion with their commerce into various countries. Thus their proverbial love of gain had been over-ruled to a providential purpose, that of carrying the knowledge of the one true God among the Gentiles. This, again, by the same secret working of Infinite Wisdom, served as a prelude to the appearance of Christianity in these countries, and would probably lessen their indisposition to receive it. By the same providential ordination of that Power who educes good from evil, the Emperor Claudius, in banishing the Christians from Rome, caused the faith to be more extensively spread by these exiles, who were dispersed through different countries: — and to mention another instance, by the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, though the comfort of Christian society was mutually lost, yet their separation caused the Gospel to be preached at the same time in two places instead of one. But though the sins of the worst men, and the infirmities of the best, are made subservient to God's gracious purposes, they justify neither the resentment of the Saint, nor the crime of the Emperor.

Saint Paul, in directing his instructions, first to the Jewish sojourners in the heathen cities, bequeathed an important lesson to all reformers, — that the most extensive plans of doing good to strangers should be accompanied with the most unabated zeal at home; and that natural connections have the prior, though not the exclusive, claim to their services.

If, in the first promulgation of the Gospel-message, the Apostle showed a regard to the *rights* of the Jewish nation, in his subsequent conduct on every possible occasion he consults even their *prejudices*. At all times he showed as much respect for their religion as was consistent with that which he now professed; always studiously endeavouring to obviate objection, and to cut off every plausible ground of complaint. Thus, in treating with deference the Jewish laws and usages, though virtually abrogated, he loudly instructs us that temperance is not to be swallowed up by zeal; that it may be prudent for a time to let some inferior errors alone, yet not without intimation or implication that they *are* errors; that premature attacks upon the lesser may obstruct the removal of the greater. And in other cases we may learn, that though extirpation may be indispensably necessary, yet it may, under certain circumstances, be better effected by the gradual process of successive strokes, than by laying at the first blow the axe to the root.

A lesson of discreet kindness may also be learnt from the same example in the domestic walks of life. If pious young persons do not patiently bear with any averseness in a parent or a friend from that serious spirit which they themselves have been happily brought to entertain; their moroseness and ill-humoured opposition, so far from recommending piety to others, will only increase their distaste of a religion, of which their own temper affords so unamiable and so unfair a specimen.

It was the same discretion which led Saint Paul at one time to confer on Timothy * the initiatory rite of the Jewish church, because his mother was of Jewish extraction; and at another, induced him to forbid Titus undergoing the same ceremony, because his origin was Pagan. † The one was allowed, to avoid doing violence to Jewish prejudices; the other prohibited, lest the Gentile convert should be taught to place his dependence on any thing but the Saviour. He inflexibly resisted granting this introductory rite to Pagan converts. Though this union of candour with firmness is a very exemplary part of his character, it has not escaped the charge of inconsistency. But he thought it was acting in a more Christian spirit, to continue, in indifferent instances, his conformity to ancient usages, than by a violent opposition to mere forms, to irritate persons,

* Acts, xvi. 3. † Gal. ii.

some of whom conscientiously persevered in them.

Perhaps no quality has been more fatal to the interests of Christianity than prejudice. It is the moral cataract of the human mind. In vain the meridian sun of Truth darts his full beams: the mental eye is impervious to the strongest ray. When religion is to be assailed, prejudice knows how to blend antipathies. It leagued those mutual enemies Herod and Pontius Pilate in one common cause. It led the Jews to prefer the robber to the Saviour. Though they abhorred the Roman yoke, yet rather than Jesus shall escape, "they will have no king but Cæsar." At Jerusalem it had united the bigot Pharisee and the infidel Sadducee against Paul, till his declaration that he was of the former class, by exciting a party-spirit, suspended, but did not extinguish their fury. At Athens it combined, in one joint opposition, two sects, the most discordant in sentiment and practice. When Divine truth was to be attacked, the rigid Stoic could unite with the voluptuous Epicurean.

Prejudice had not only blinded the understanding of the Jews, so as to prevent their receiving truth, but led them to violate it, by asserting a glaring falsehood. When our Lord told them, that "if they would know the truth, the truth would make them free"—as they had no idea of spiritual freedom, so of civil liberty they had nothing to boast. But, exasperated at any

offer of deliverance, because it implied subjugation, they indignantly replied, "We were never in bondage to any man," though it was notorious that they had been bond-slaves in Egypt, captives in Babylon, and were, at the very moment of this proud boast, tributary to the Romans.

Ignorance and prejudice respecting religion can never be fairly pleaded in excuse, by minds cultivated by diligent enquiry on other subjects. Paul, indeed, says that, though a persecutor, he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly. The apology from him is valid, for he does not offer the plea for ignorance and prejudice, till he was cured of both. His sincerity appears in his abandoning his error, his humility in confessing it. Our spiritual strength is increased by the retrospection of our former faults. This remembrance left a compassionate feeling for the errors of others on the impressible heart of Saint Paul. Perhaps in his early mad career against the Church of Christ, he might be permitted to carry it to such lengths, to afford a proof that Omnipotence can subdue even prejudice!

It is a melancholy feature in the character of the human mind, that Saint Paul met with less mercy from his brethren, among whom he had been bred, and whose religion approaceed so much nearer to that which he had adopted, than from the higher class of the Pagans, who stood at the farthest possible distance from it. Caiaphas, Ananias, Tertullus, and the whole

Sanhedrim, were far more violent than Lysias, Felix, Festus, Gallio, the town-clerk of Ephesus, or the rulers of Thessalonica.

Even on that awful occasion, when prejudice did its worst, the Roman judge, who condemned the Saviour of the world, was more candid than the High Priest, who delivered him up. While the Jews cried, Crucify! the Governor declared "he found no fault in him;" and, but for the suppleness and venality of his character, would have protected the life which he sacrificed to Jewish bigotry. While Pilate deliberated, Caiaphas cut the matter short on the plea of *expediency** — "It is expedient that one man should die for the people." In this High Priest the doctrine found a patron worthy of itself.

There was in the Divine Sufferer a veiled majesty; there was a mysterious grandeur thrown round his character; there were glimpses of glory breaking through the obscurity in which he was shrouded, which excited a curiosity not unmingled with fear in the great ones of the earth. It was a grand illustration of that solemn indistinctness which is said to be one cause of the sublime. Both Herod and Pilate were surprised into something like an involuntary respect, mixed with a vague apprehension of they knew not what.

* John, xviii. 14.

But to return from this too long digression, for which the only apology that can be offered, is, that the uniform temper and conduct of Saint Paul with the Jews were eminently calculated to parry every objection that had any show of reason, and to remove every prejudice which was not invincible.

In the case of Paul, Agrippa appears to have been the only Jew in authority who ever manifested any show of candour towards him. Even the offended Athenians were so far affected with his discourse, as to betray their emotion by saying, "We will hear thee again on this matter;" thus civilly softening rejection into procrastination; — while there is scarcely an instance of any Jewish people, as a body, fairly enquiring into the truth of the Christian doctrine with a real desire of information.

The Bereans, indeed, offer an honourable exception, and are accordingly distinguished by one, who rarely employs epithets, the biographer of St. Paul, with the appellation of "noble." This thinking people did not lightly embrace the new religion without enquiry, but received it upon rational examination, daily "searching the Scriptures;" thus presenting us with an example of that union of faith and reason which constitutes the character of a sound Christian.

Though the Gentiles were ready to oppose Saint Paul wherever he came, we do not find that they pursued him with hostility from one

city to another, as the Jews of Thessalonica did, in following him to Berea, to excite a persecution against him.

The temper to which allusion has been made, is not, it is to be feared, quite extinct. Are there not, at this favoured period of light and knowledge, some Christians by profession, who manifest more hostility towards those who are labouring to procure instruction for the Hindoos, than towards Hindooism itself? Are not shades of our own colour looked at with a more jealous eye than a colour of the most opposite character? And is not the remark too nearly founded in experience, that approximation rather inflames than cools; that nearness aggravates because it is not identity?

If, like the Apostle, a man is impelled by his conscience to act against the opinion of those with whom he desires to live well; to obey the impulse, as it is a severer trial of his feelings, so it is a surer test of his integrity, than to expose himself to the censure of his enemies; of *their* hostility he was assured before; he is, in the other case, risking the loss of his friends.

Saint Paul's prudence under the Divine direction led him to adopt very different measures in his intercourse with the Jews and with the Gentiles; measures suggested by the different condition of the two classes, both in their civil and in their religious circumstances. To the

one, the very name of Messiah was unknown; of the other, he was both the glory and the shame. To the one true God in whom they fully believed, they were to add the reception of Jesus Christ. "He came to his own," but his own, so far from receiving, crucified him. Subsequently to this event, Paul laboured to convince them that this was the Saviour promised, first by God himself, then by a long and unbroken succession of the very prophets whom they professed to venerate. With these adversaries, therefore, he had substantial grounds on which to expostulate; analogies, from which to argue; promises, which they believed; predictions, of which they had expected the accomplishment; and, to leave them without the shadow of excuse, he had to plead the actual recent fulfilment of these predictions.

But with the Gentiles he had no common ground on which to stand, no references to which to send them, no analogies from which to reason, except, indeed, the visible works of creation and providence. He did what a profound thinker of our own country has since done more in detail; he showed them *the analogy of revealed religion with the constitution and course of nature.* * In this he had, as it were, to address their senses rather than their intellect or their knowledge, great as were both, — for

* Bishop Butler.

their wisdom had served only to lead them wider from the mark.

As they were little acquainted with first principles, he had with them no middle way to take. He could not improve upon polytheism; there was no such thing as mending idolatry; it was not a building to be repaired; it must be demolished; no materials were to be picked out from its ruins towards the construction of the everlasting edifice; the rubbish must be rolled away. A clear stage must be left for the new order of things; with this order it had no compatibilities; old things were past away, all things must become new.

The Sun of Righteousness which was to absorb the faint, but not false, lights of Judaism, was utterly to dispel the darkness of paganism. One of the Roman emperors (most of whom thought that they could not have too many gods, nor too little religion,) would have added Jesus to the number of their deities. Paul abhorred any such compromise. "We know," says he, "an idol is nothing in the world." Such an association, therefore, would not be of good and bad, but of every thing with nothing. Christianity would not accept of any thing short of the annihilation of the whole mythologic rabble.

The new economy was now to take place. The fundamental doctrine of One God over all blessed for ever, which had been long familiar

to the Jew, was at length to be made known to the heathen, with the participation in common with the Jew of salvation by his Son. The partition-wall was taken down for ever.

Paul however retained, to the end of his ministry, a cordial kindness for "his brethren after the flesh." His heart's desire and prayer for Israel was, that they might be saved, —for the Rose of Sharon was grafted on the Stem of David. Not only the same God was to be worshipped by both, but "Jesus whom he had sent;" while paganism lay prostrate, never more to rise from its ruins. It is a remarkable circumstance, that while to this day surviving Israel remains without a Temple, the surviving Pantheon remains without a worshipper.

CHAP. VIII.

SAINT PAUL'S JUDGMENT IN HIS INTERCOURSE WITH THE PAGANS.

It is among the mysteries of Christianity, that the preaching of Jesus made so few converts, and his death so many. The more affecting were his discourses, the stronger was the indignation they excited; the deeper was the anxiety which he expressed for the salvation of men, so much the more vehemently were they exasperated against him; the more merciful were his miracles, so much the faster did they accelerate his ignominious catastrophe. — "Did not this prove," says the eloquent Bossuet, "that not his words, but his Cross, was to bring all men to Him? Does it not prove that the power of his persuasion consisted in the shedding of his blood?" This he himself predicted — "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Were it not for this reason, it would be astonishing to our shallow wisdom, that the Author of Christianity made so few proselytes to his own faith, and his apostles so many: that the disciple who denied Him should, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, awaken, by a single sermon, the consciences of three thousand auditors; and that the persecutor, who reviled

Him, should become, under the influence of the same Divine Spirit, the mighty instrument of the conversion of the pagan world!

If Saint Paul had declined visiting the learned and polished regions of Greece, it might have been produced against him, that he carefully avoided those cultivated cities where men were best able to judge of the consistency of the Gospel doctrines with its precepts, and of the truth of those miracles by which its Divinity was confirmed. The Greeks might have urged it as an argument against Saint Paul's integrity, that he confined his preaching to the countries which they called barbarous, knowing that they would be less acute in discovering inconsistencies, and more easily imposed upon by impostures which men of liberal education would have immediately detected. His visiting every city famous for literature, science, and philosophy, would also be a complete refutation of any such charge in after ages. "Because," says a judicious commentator, "if upon an accurate examination great numbers of men embraced the Gospel, who were best qualified to judge of its nature and evidences, their conversion would render it indubitable in after times, that the Gospel was supported by those great and undeniable miracles which were performed in every country by the preachers of Christianity; so that no person might hereafter suspect that idolatry was destroyed and Chris-

tianity established merely through the simplicity and ignorance of the people among whom it was first preached." *

Saint Paul was with more propriety selected to be the Apostle of the Gentiles than if he had been of Gentile extraction; none but a teacher, educated as he had been, under an eminent Jewish doctor, would have been so competent to produce, before both Jews and Gentiles, proofs that the miracles, sufferings, and death of Jesus happened in exact conformity to the predictions of those prophets of whom the Jews had perfect knowledge, and to whom, though the Gentiles previously knew them not, yet it is probable that he afterwards, for their fuller confirmation, would refer them.

There appears to have been a considerable difference between Saint Paul's reception among the Jewish and the Gentile populace. Among the former, the "common people who had heard Jesus gladly" must have had their prejudices softened, and in many instances removed; even those, probably, who were not converted, had seen and heard of his miracles with astonishment. They were also witnesses of the wonderful effects produced by Saint Peter's sermon. Their minds were become so favourably disposed, that, after the miracle wrought by Peter and John†,

* Macknight on the Life of Saint Paul.
† Acts, iv.

the enraged council did not venture to punish them, "because of the people, for all men glorified God for that which was done."

While the heathen governors seem, in their transactions with Saint Paul, less intolerant than the Jewish Sanhedrim, the heathen multitude appear to have been more furious than the Jewish. The Jewish leaders had a personal hatred to Christ; the Gentile community had a national hatred to the Jews. If a party amongst the Jews detested the Christians, the pagans as a body despised the Jews, whilst they would consider Christianity but as a new modification of an antiquated and degrading superstition, made worse by the offensive exposition of certain tenets, still more unphilosophical and incredible than were taught under the old dispensation. The contempt of the Gentiles was founded on their ignorance of the true religion of the Jews, and that again had prevented any enquiry into their opinions. From the prejudiced pen of Tacitus, and the sarcastic muse of Juvenal, we see the disdain in which they were held. These great writers, only less culpable than modern infidels, like them collected a string of misrepresentations, and then turned into ridicule the system of their own invention.

The philosophers, who disagreed each with the other, all joined in contemning more especially one doctrine of Christianity, which every

sect alike conceived to be the most inconsistent with their own tenets, and the most contradictory to general philosophical principles, — the resurrection of the body, which they contemptuously called the *hope of worms*.

The pagan magistrates looked with a jealous eye upon all innovators; not indeed so much from an aversion to any novelty of religious opinion, — for to this they were so indifferent as to make little objection to any mode of worship which did not seek to subvert their own; — but through the machinations of the mercenary priests, who, fearful of any invasion of their corrupt establishment, any detection of their frauds, any disclosure of their mysteries, any danger to their altars, their auguries, their profitable oracles, and, above all, any abridgment of their political influence; excited the civil governors against Paul by the stale artifice of insinuating that his designs were hostile to the state.

The artisans, who enriched themselves by the occupation of making the symbols of idolatry, found that, by the contempt into which their deities were likely to be brought, their craft would not only be endangered but destroyed. This conviction, more perhaps than any zeal for their own religion, served to influence them also against that of Saint Paul. And, finally, the populace, who liked the easy and pleasant way of appeasing their divinities by shows and pageants, and ceremonies, and

lustral days, were unwilling to lose their holidays, and all the decorations and pleasures which distinguished them, and did not care to exchange this gay and amusing religion for the spiritual, sober, and unostentatious worship of the Christians.

There was therefore no disposition in any class of society to receive the doctrines of the Gospel, or to forgive the intrusion of its teachers. Saint Paul, unsupported, unfriended, had to open his own commission to audiences backed by multitudes, protected by power, patronised by learning, countenanced by the national priesthood. It was a far more unequal contest than that of David and Goliath; for, besides the people, he had to combat with the giants of Areopagus. But greater was He that was for him, than they who were against him.

Had he not been an adept in the knowledge of human nature, how could there have been, in his diversified discourses, such an adaptation to the moral wants of man? His superiority in this respect appears not only in his general knowledge of man in the abstract, but in his acquaintance with life and manners, in what we call knowledge of the world; in his scrupulous observance of time and place, in his admirable judgment in so skilfully accommodating his discourses to the condition, character, and circumstances of the persons whom he addressed. To some he applied as to decided enemies to

Christianity; to others as utterly unacquainted with its nature, and ignorant of its design, but not averse from enquiring into its truth. He always carefully distinguished between the errors of the followers of religion and the sins of her adversaries. To some he addressed himself as awakened, to others as enlightened, to many as sincere, but to none as absolutely perfect.

The various powers of his opulent mind he exercised with a wise appropriation to the genius of those whom he addressed. With the Jews "he reasoned;" with the Athenian controvertists "he disputed;" at Ephesus, "he boldly disputed and persuaded."

The Apostle's zeal was never cooled by the improbability of success. He knew that what seemed hopeless to men was not impossible to God. Even at Paphos, where the most impure worship was offered to the most impure deity, he made a very important convert in the Proconsul himself.* This wise governor holds out an example to men in high public stations; he suffered not himself to be influenced by report, or duped by misrepresentation; he would *hear with his own ears* "the word of God" which Paul preached, and *see with his own eyes* the miracle which confirmed it.

In his preaching at Antioch†, he introduces

* Sergius Paulus. Acts, xiii. † Acts, xiii.

his high commission to the Gentiles in the most dignified and masterly manner, referring the Jewish auditors to the striking passages of their national history; to the prophecies and their fulfilment; to the attestation of the Baptist; to Christ's death and resurrection. He ends with a most awful peroration: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish;" and then with a measured sternness which nothing could shake, he makes the disclosure of that grand scheme of Almighty Goodness, — the scheme of proclaiming to the Gentiles that Gospel which the chosen people to whom it had been offered so contumeliously rejected. How striking the contrast of manner in which these words of the Apostle were received by the two classes of hearers! — the envy and malignity, "the contradictions and blasphemies of the Jews;" the joyful gratitude with which the heathen "glorified the word of the Lord," at the annunciation of a blessing so vast and so unexpected!

To the people of Lystra his address is short, plain, and simple, yet passionate and energetic; so plain, as to be not only understood but felt by the meanest auditor; yet so powerful, that, when aided by a miracle of mercy, which he wrought before them, he scarcely restrained them from offering him Divine honours. His appearance before Felix having been more largely detailed by the sacred historian, we may well be allowed a more particular consideration

of it. Heathen historians represent Felix as having, by every kind of misconduct, excited disturbances in Judea, and by exactions and oppressions incurred the contempt of his subjects, to whom he had occasioned great calamities; his mal-administration, but for the intervention of the governor of Syria, would have kindled a war; and an instance of it indeed occurs on the very occasion of which we are about to speak, in Paul's long detention in confinement. It is recorded in the Acts, that he hoped the Apostle would have bribed him with money, in order to procure his escape.*

Let us now contrast the different conduct of the popular advocate retained by the Jews against Paul, with that of Paul himself, towards this corrupt governor. Tertullus, a florid speaker, is not ashamed, in the true spirit of party oratory, to offer the grossest adulation to this wicked judge; not only extolling what he knew to be false, — the tranquillity produced by his administration, and "the worthy deeds" done by him, — but even exalting him into a sort of deity, by whose *providence* their prosperity was procured. Then, in the usual strain of artful and disingenuous adulation, having already exceeded all bounds of decency, he finishes his harangue by hypocritically expressing his fears that praise "might be tedious to him."

* Acts, xxiv.

After the affected declamation of this rhetorical parasite, how we are refreshed with the wise, temperate, and simple defence of the Apostle! Instead of loading Tertullus with reproaches for the infamous charges of heresy and sedition brought against himself, he maintains a dignified silence till the governor "beckoned to him to speak." He then enters upon his vindication without a single invective against his accusers, and, what is still more honourable to to his own character, without a single compliment to his judge, though well aware that his liberty, and even his life, were in his hands. Unjust as Felix was, the charges against Saint Paul were too flagrantly false to mislead him, and the noble simplicity of the prisoner's defence carried in it something so convincing to the understanding of the judge, that he durst not act upon the allegations of the accuser, nor condemn the innocent.

At a subsequent meeting, Paul seemed more intent to alarm the conscience of the governor, than he had previously been to assert his own integrity. Felix, ever presenting us with the idea of a bad mind ill at ease with itself, sends for Paul, and desires to "hear him concerning the faith of Christ." Charmed, no doubt, with the occasion given him, Paul uses it wisely. He does not embark on topics irrelevant to the immediate case of his auditors, nor by personal reproof does he expose himself to the charge of

contumacy. He never loses sight of the respect due to the judge's office, but still, as he knew the venality and profligacy with which he administered that office, together with the licentious character of his wife, who was present, he reasoned, not declaimed; "he *reasoned*" on the virtues in which he knew they were so shamefully deficient—*righteousness and temperance*; and then, doubtless with the dignity of one who was himself to "judge angels," closed his discourse with referring these notorious violators of *both* duties to the judgment *to come*.

The result of this discourse is the best evidence of the power of his reasonings. — Conscience-struck, *Felix trembled*. — The judge dissolved the court, dismissed the prisoner, withheld the sentence, deferred the further trial to an indefinite time, — which time he contrived should never arrive, till both were cited to appear together before the mighty Judge of quick and dead. Saint Paul throughout maintains his character, and Felix adds one to the numberless instances in which strong convictions not being followed up, only serve to enhance guilt and aggravate condemnation.

To the inhabitants of Ephesus his reasoning and his persuasive powers are alternately exercised. In his conduct in this place we incidentally discover a singular instance of his discretion in his care not to excite unnecessary irritation. He found in the Ephesians a strong

devotion to one particular idol; yet it is intimated, in a candid speech of their chief magistrate, that he had neither reviled their great goddess Diana, nor profaned their temples. We may, therefore, fairly presume, that he contented himself with preaching against idolatry in general, instead of endeavouring to excite the popular indignation by inveighing against the local idol.*

It is not the meanest of the triumphs of incipient Christianity, that at this place the professors of forbidden arts brought out their costly professional books, the registers of their unlawful mysteries, and burnt them, giving a striking proof of the sincerity of their conversion, by thus putting it out of their power to repeat their impious incantations; their destroying them "before all men" was a triple sacrifice of their prejudices, their credit, and their profit. What an example have they left to those who, though professing Christianity, give birth, or afford encouragement, to profane or profligate books, which, though of a different character from those of the Ephesian sorcerers, possess a *magic* power over the mind of the reader, not less pernicious in itself, and far more extensive in its influence.†

* Acts, xix.

† When the French Revolution had brought to light the fatal consequences of some of Voltaire's writings, some half-scrupulous persons, no longer willing to afford

Saint Paul's good sense, and may we be permitted to say, his good taste, — qualities we could rather wish than expect to see *always* brought to the service of religion, — were eminently displayed in his examination at Cesarea. While his pleading before the royal audience, and other persons of dignity and station, exhibits a fine specimen of wisdom and good breeding, it exhibits it without the smallest sacrifice of principle, or the least abatement of truth. At once, his doctrines are scriptural, and his language is classical. On this occasion, as upon all others, conscious dignity is mingled with politeness; an air, carrying with it the authority of truth, with the gentleness of Christianity, pervades all he says and does.

This admirable conduct has extorted, even from that eloquent rhapsodist, the sceptical author * of "The Characteristics," a confession, "how handsomely Paul accommodates himself to the apprehension and temper of those polite people, the witty Athenians, and the Roman court of judicature, in the presence of their great men and ladies."

At this last-named memorable audience, with

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his fourscore volumes a place in their library, sold them at a low price. This measure, though it "stayed the plague" in their own houses, caused the infection to spread wider. The Ephesian magicians made no such compromise: *they burnt theirs.*

* Lord Shaftesbury.

what admirable temper does he preserve his reverence for constituted authorities, while he boldly recapitulates those passages in his former life which were naturally calculated to give offence! — His preliminary compliment to Agrippa was judiciously conceived in a manner to procure attention to his projected defence, without in any sense deserving the name of flattery, or in any degree compromising the truth he meant to deliver. While it answered its proper end, it served as an attestation of his own veracity and of the truth of Christianity; for in complimenting the King on the knowledge of the facts to which he referred him, he laid himself open to immediate detection if the circumstances had not been strictly correct; affording "a remarkable proof," says Lord Lyttelton, both of the notoriety of the fact and the integrity of the man, who, with so fearless a confidence, could call upon a King to give testimony for him, while he was sitting in judgment upon him."

The whole defence is as rational as it is elegant. The self-possession, the modest intrepidity, and the pertinent choice of matter, furnish a model for innocent sufferers under similar circumstances.

As, on the one hand, it is a great hardship for an accused person to have to plead before ignorance and prejudice; so, on the other, it was not more just, than polite and prudent, for

Saint Paul to begin by expressing his satisfaction that he should at least be tried by a judge, who, from his knowledge, his education, and his habits, was competent to determine on the cause. While he scruples not to declare the inveterate prejudices, the blindness, and the persecuting spirit of his former life, he does ample justice to his own character as a scholar and a moralist. Well as he knew that his piety would not clear him at the tribunal before which he stood, yet the fair justification of himself from the crimes laid to his charge, was due, not only to his own character, but to the religion which he professed.

Having been himself brought to embrace Christianity by no powers of reasoning, by no trains of argument, he allowed himself either to employ or neglect them at discretion in addressing these assemblies. On the present occasion he limits himself to matter of fact, and seems to think a statement of his own conversion would be more likely to impress a judge "expert in all customs and questions which were among the Jews." He insists dogmatically but on one point, the great doctrine of the Resurrection, for asserting which he had been so often assailed; and he asks, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible?" This, however, he does not *argue;* perhaps conscious of having so amply stated, and so argumentatively defended

it in his epistolary writings, now sufficiently known.

Festus, with that scorn which any allusion to this tenet never failed to excite, impatiently interrupted him, but with a reproof which had more of irony than anger, as if he thought his credulity rather the effect of insanity than of wickedness, the object of ridicule rather than of censure. This irritating charge, however, did not make Paul forget the respect due to the place which Festus filled; and while he vindicated the soundness of his own intellect, and the sobriety of his doctrine, he did not fail to address the governor by the honourable appellation of "most noble," to which his dignity entitled him. His example in this respect, as in all other particulars, was of an instructive nature; teaching us to separate the civility of speech due to office, from the respect due only to personal character, and justifying the modern titles and epithets of reverence, which have occasioned so much discussion in many of our public forms.

The Apostle's speech had produced a considerable emotion in the King, who, however, was determined to act rather upon his convenience than his convictions. The Apostle concludes as he had begun, by seizing on the part of Agrippa's character which he could most conscientiously commend, his perfect knowledge of the subject before the court. In his solemn

interrogation at the close, "King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets?" more is meant than meets the ear; for, if he really believed the Prophets, could he refuse to believe the accomplishment of their predictions? His emphatical answer to his own question, "I know that thou believest," drew from the startled monarch a free avowal of his partial convictions. The brief but affecting prayer with which the trial closes is as elegantly turned as if the Apostle had been the courtier.

Agrippa appears, in this instance, in a light so much more advantageous than any of the other judges before whom either Saint Paul or his Lord was cited, that we cannot but regret that he let slip an occasion so providentially put in his way. This illustrious person affords another awful proof of the danger of stifling convictions, postponing enquiries, and neglecting opportunities.

Though the political and military splendour of Athens had declined, and the seat of government, after the conquest of Greece by the Romans, was transferred to Corinth, yet her sun of glory was not set. Philosophy and the liberal arts were still carefully cultivated; students in every department, and from every quarter, resorted thither for improvement, and her streets were crowded by senators and rhetoricians, philosophers and statesmen.

As Saint Paul visited Athens with views

which had instigated no preceding, and would probably be entertained by no subsequent, traveller, so his attention in that most interesting city was attracted by objects far different from theirs. He was in all probability qualified to range, with a learned eye, over the exquisite pieces of art, and to consult and enjoy the curious treasures of literature, — theatres, and temples, and schools of philosophy, sepulchres and cenotaphs, statues of patriots, and portraits of heroes; — monuments by which the artist had insured to himself the immortality he was conferring. Yet one structure alone arrested the Apostle's notice, — the altar of the idolatrous worshippers. One record of antiquity alone invited his critical acumen, — THE INSCRIPTION "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."

The disposition of this people, their passion for disputation, their characteristic and proverbial love of novelty, had drawn together a vast assembly. Many of the philosophical sects eagerly joined the audience.

Curiosity is called by an ancient writer the wantonness of knowledge. These critics came, it is likely, not as enquirers, but as spies. The grave Stoics probably expected to hear some new unbroached doctrine, which they might overthrow by argument; the lively Epicureans some fresh absurdity in religion, which would afford a new field for diversion; the citizens, perhaps, crowding and listening from the mere

motive that they might afterwards have to tell the *new thing* they should hear. Saint Paul took advantage of their curiosity. As he habitually opened his discourses with great moderation, we are the less surprised at the measured censure, or rather the implied civility of his introduction. The ambiguous term "superstitious" which he employed, might be either construed into respect for their spirit of religious enquiry, or into disapprobation of its unreasonable excess; at least he intimated that they were so far from not reverencing the acknowledged gods, that they worshipped one which was "unknown."

With his usual discriminating mind, he did not "reason" with these elegant and learned Polytheists "out of the Scriptures," of which they were totally ignorant, as he had done at Antioch and Cesarea, before judges who were trained in the knowledge of them: he addressed his present auditors with an eloquent exposition of natural religion, and of the providential government of God, politely illustrating his observations by citing passages from one of their own authors. Even by this quotation, without having recourse to Scripture, he was able to controvert the Epicurean doctrine, that the Deity had no interference with human concerns; showing them, on their own principles, that "we are the offspring of God;" that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being;"

and it is worth observing, that he could select from a poet sentiments which should come nearer to the truth than from a philosopher.*

The orator, rising with his subject, after briefly touching on the long-suffering of God, awfully announced that ignorance would be no longer any plea for idolatry; that if the Divine forbearance had permitted it so long, it was in order to make the wisest not only see, but feel the insufficiency of their own wisdom in what related to the great concerns of religion; but He now *commanded all men every where to repent.* He concludes by announcing the solemnities of Christ's future judgment, and the resurrection from the dead.

In considering Saint Paul's manner of unfolding to these wits and sages the power and goodness of that Supreme Intelligence who was the object of their "ignorant worship," we are at once astonished at his intrepidity and his management; intrepidity, in preferring this bold charge against an audience of the most accomplished scholars in the world, — in charging ignorance upon Athens! blindness on the "eye of Greece!" — and management, in so judiciously conducting his oration, that the audience expressed neither impatience nor displeasure, till he began to unfold the most obnoxious and unpopular of all doctrines, — Jesus raised from the dead.

* Acts, xvii.

It is recorded by Saint Luke of this polished and highly intellectual city, that it was *wholly given up to idolatry*; a confirmation of the remark of Pausanias, that there were more image-worshippers in Athens than in all Greece besides.

We have here a clear proof that the reasonableness of Christianity was no recommendation to its adoption by those people who, of all others, were acknowledged to have cultivated reason the most highly. What a melancholy and heart-humbling conviction, that wit and learning, in their loftiest elevation, open no natural avenue to religion in the heart of man; that the grossest ignorance leaves it not more inaccessible to Divine truth! Saint Paul never appears to have made so few proselytes in any place as at Athens; and it is so far from being true, as its disciples assert, that philosophy is never intolerant, that the most bitter persecution ever inflicted on the Christians was under the most philosophical of all the Roman emperors. *

In this celebrated city, in which Plato, near five hundred years before, discoursed so eloquently on the immortality of the soul, Paul first preached the resurrection of the body. Horace speaks of *searching* for truth in the groves of Academus, but Saint Paul was the first who ever *taught* it there.

* Marcus Aurelius.

CHAP. IX.

ON THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF SAINT PAUL'S WRITINGS.

ONE of the most distinguished writers of antiquity says, that "one man may believe himself to be as certain of his error as another of his truth." How many illustrious ancients, under the influence of this conceit, may either have carried truth out of its proper sphere, or brought in some error to fill the place which the truth, so transferred, had left vacant! The Pagan philosophers held so great a variety of opinions of the supreme good of the nature of man, that one of their most learned writers is said to have reckoned the number to amount to no less than two hundred and eighty-eight.*

Christianity ought to be accounted a singular blessing, were it only that it has simplified this conjectural arithmetic, and reduced the hundreds to a unit. Saint Paul's brief, but comprehensive definition, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," forming one grand central point, in which, if all the vain aims and unsatisfied desires of the anxious philosophers do not meet, this succinct character of Christianity abundantly supplies what their aims and

* Varro.

desires failed to accomplish; for "they erred, not knowing the Scriptures:" those Scriptures which proclaim the wants of man when they declare his depravity, and "the power of God, in providing its only remedy."

Saint Paul labours sedulously to convince his converts of the apostasy of the human race. He knew this to be the only method of rendering the Scriptures either useful or intelligible; no other book having explicitly proclaimed or circumstantially unfolded this prime truth. He furnishes his followers with this key, that they might both unlock the otherwise hidden treasures of the Bible, and open the secret recesses of their own hearts. He knew that without this strict inquisition into what was passing within, without this experimental knowledge of their own lapsed state, the best books may be read with little profit, and even prayer be offered up with little effect.

He directs them to follow up this self-inspection, because without it they could not determine on the quality, even of their best actions. "Examine yourselves; prove your ownselves," is his frequent exhortation. He knew, that if we did not impede the entrance of Divine light into our own hearts, it would show us many an unsuspected corruption; that it would not only disclose existing evils, but awaken the remembrance of former ones, of which perhaps the consequences still remain,

though time and negligence have effaced the act itself from the memory.

Whatever be the structure they intend to erect, the apostles always dig deep for a foundation before they begin to build. "On Jesus Christ, and him crucified," as on a broad and solid basis, Saint Paul builds all doctrine, and grounds all practice; and firm indeed should that foundation be, which has to sustain such a weight. He points to Him as the sole author of justifying faith. From this doctrine he derives all sanctity, all duty, and all consolation. After having proved it to be productive of that most substantial of all supports, *peace with God;* this peace he promises, not only through the benignity of God, but through the grace of Christ, showing by an induction of particulars, the process of this love of God in its moral effects, — how afflictions promote "patience," how patience fortifies the mind by "experience," and how experience generates "hope;" — reverting always in the end to the point from which he sets out; to that love of God, which is kindled in the heart by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

He makes all true holiness to hinge on this fundamental doctrine of redemption by the Son of God, never separating his offices from his person, nor his example from his propitiation; never teaching that man's nature is to be re-

formed, without pointing out the instrument, and the manner by which the reformation is to be effected. For one great excellence of Saint Paul's writings consists, not only in his demonstrating to us the riches and the glories of Christ, but in showing how they may be conveyed to us; how we may become possessed of an interest, of a right in them.

Though there is no studied separation of the doctrinal from the practical parts of his Epistles, they who would enter most deeply into a clear apprehension of the former, would best do it by a strict obedience to the precepts of the latter. He every where shows that the way to receive the truth is to obey it; and the way to obey is to love it. Nothing so effectually bars up the heart, and even the understanding, against the reception of truth, as the practice of sin. "If any man will DO his will," says the Divine Teacher himself, "he shall *know* of the doctrine." *

It is in this practical application of Divine truth, that the supreme excellence of Saint Paul's preaching consists. Whenever he has been largely expatiating on the glorious privileges of believers, he never omits to guard his doctrine from the use to which he probably foresaw loose professors might convert it, if

* John, vii. 17.

delivered to the uninformed, stripped from the connection with its proper adjunct. *

Thus, his doctrines are never barely theoretical. He hedges them in, as we have elsewhere observed, with the whole circle of duties, or with such as more immediately grow out of his subject, whether they relate to God, to others, or to ourselves. Though it would not be easy to produce, in his writings, a single doctrine which is not so protected, nevertheless, perhaps, there is scarcely one, in the adoption of which, bold intruders have not leaped over the fence he raised; or by their negligence laid it bare for the unhallowed entrance of others, converting his inclosure into a waste. If the duty of living righteously, soberly, and godly, was ever pre-eminently taught by any instructor, that instructor is Saint Paul; if ever the instructions of any Teacher have been strained or perverted, they are his. But if he never presses any virtue, as independent of faith, which is too much the case with some, he never fails to press it as a consequence of faith, which is sometimes neglected by others. The one class preach faith, as if it were an insulated doctrine; the

* We learn from Saint Peter that this perversion had begun even in his own time. Ebion and his followers afterwards pushed the charge against Paul as far as Antinomianism. Nor has the spirit of the accusation on the one hand, nor the adulteration of the principle on the other, entirely ceased.

other virtue, as if it were a self-originating principle.

It is also worthy of observation, that in that complete code of Evangelical law, the twelfth chapter of the Romans, after unfolding, with the most lucid clearness, the great truths of our religion, he carefully inculcates the *temper* it demands, before he proceeds to enforce the duties it imposes; that we must be "holy" before we can be "acceptable;" that we must be transformed in the renewing of our mind, is at once made a consequence of the grace of God, and a preliminary to our duties towards our fellow-creatures. We must offer up "*ourselves* a living sacrifice to God," before we are directed to act conscientiously to man. The other disposition, which he names as an indispensable prelude, is humility; for in the very opening of his subject, he prefaces it with an injunction, *not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.* To omit to cultivate the spirit in which doctrines are to be embraced, and the temper in which duties are to be performed, is to mutilate Christianity, and to rob it of its appropriate character and its highest grace. After having shown the means for the acquisition of virtue, he teaches us diligently to solicit that Divine aid, without which all means are ineffectual, and all virtues spurious.

In this invaluable summary, or rather this *spirit* of Christian laws, there is scarcely any

class of persons to which some appropriate exhortation is not directed. After particularly addressing those who fill different degrees of the ministerial office, he proceeds to the more general instructions in which all are equally interested. Here, again, he does not fail to introduce his documents with some powerful principle. Affection and sincerity are the inward feelings which must regulate action: — "let *love* be without *dissimulation*."

The love he inculcates is of the most large and liberal kind; compassion to the indigent, tender sympathy with the feelings of others, whether of joy or sorrow, as their respective circumstances require; the duties of friendship and hospitality are not forgotten; condescension to inferiors; a disposition to be at peace with all men is enforced; — from his deep knowledge of the human heart, implying, however, by a significant parenthesis — *if it be possible* — the difficulty, if not impossibility, which its corruptions would bring to the establishment of universal concord.

He applies himself to all the tender sensibilities of the heart, and concatenates the several fruits of charity so closely, from being aware how ready people are to deceive themselves on this article, and to make one branch of this comprehensive grace stand proxy for another; he knew that many are disposed to make almsgiving a ground for neglecting the less pleasant

parts of charity; that some give, in order that they may rail, and think that while they open their purses, they need put no restraint on their tongues.

He closes his catalogue of duties with those which we owe to our enemies; and, in a paradox peculiar to the genius of Christianity, shows that the revengeful are the conquered, and those who have the magnanimity to forgive the conquerors. He exhorts to this new and heroic species of victory over evil, not merely by exhibiting patience under it, but by overcoming its assaults with good. Could this conquest over nature, which soars far above mere forgiveness, be obtained by any other power but by the supernatural strength previously communicated?

Thus he every where demonstrates, that the maxims of the morality he inculcates are derived from a full fountain, and fed by perennial supplies. When he speaks of human virtue, he never disconnects it from Divine influence. When he recommends the "perfecting holiness," it must be done "in the fear of the Lord." He shows that there is no other way of conquering the love of the world, the allurements of pleasure, and the predominance of selfishness, but by seeking a conformity to the image of God, as well as by aiming at obedience to his law.

That ignorance is the mother of devotion,

has been the axiom of a superstitious church; nor is the votary of fanaticism less apt to despise knowledge than the slave of superstition.

The first thing that God formed in nature was light. This preliminary blessing disclosed the other beauties of his creation, which had else remained as unseen as if they had remained uncreated. By that analogy which runs through his works, his first operation on the heart is bestowing on it the light of his grace. Amidst the causes of the corruptions of conscience, the darkness of ignorance is scarcely to be distinguished from that of sin.

Such indeed is the condition of man in his present state, that he ought to labour indefatigably, under the Divine teaching, to recover some glimpses of that intellectual worth which he lost when he forfeited his spiritual excellence. Religious men should be diligent in obtaining knowledge, or they will not be able to resist gainsayers; they will swallow assertions for truths, and conclude every objection to be valid which they cannot refute. An unfurnished mind is liable to a state of continual indecision. Error will have the advantage in the combat, where the champion of truth enters the field without arms; for impiety still shows itself, as it did in the Garden of Eden, under the semblance of knowledge.

Saint Paul estimated just views and right notions in religion so highly, that he makes the

improvement in knowledge in the Colossians a matter not only of fervent desire, but of incessant prayer. He prays that they might be not only sincere but intelligent Christians, "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" but he does not forget to teach them that this knowledge must be made practical; *they must walk worthy of the Lord; they must be fruitful in every good work.* It is among the high ascriptions of glory to Christ, that in Him are hid all the treasures of *wisdom* and *knowledge.* And this ascription is pressed upon *us* for the manifest purpose of impelling us to seek a due participation of them from Him.

Saint Paul was a strenuous opposer of religious ignorance. It is not too much to say, that he places Intelligence as the ground-work of Christianity. To *know* God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, he considers as the first rudiments taught in the Divine school. This knowledge can be acquired only by a cordial love, and indefatigable study of the volume of Inspiration. All the conjectures of the brightest imagination, all the discoveries of the profoundest science, all the glorious objects of created beauty, all the attributes of angels, all the ideas of excellence we can conceive or combine, afford but faint shadows, inexpressive figures of the Divinity. The best lights we can throw upon his perfections are from his own

Word, assisted by his own Spirit; the clearest sight we can obtain of them is from our faith in that word, and our only strength from our acquiesence in the offers of that Spirit.

And where shall we look in the whole sacred Record for a more consummate statement, at once, of the proper objects of knowledge, and of the duties resulting from its acquisition, than in the writings of this Apostle? No one who has devoutly studied him can shift off the neglect of duty by the plea of ignorance. It would be vindicating one sin by committing another. He every where exhibits such luminous characters of God and Christ, such clear views of right and wrong, such living pictures of good and evil, such striking contrasts of human corruption and Christian purity, that he who would evade the condemnation which awaits the neglect, or the violation, of duty, must produce some other apology than that he did not know it. What excuse will those modern sceptics offer for their traducement of writings, which they were too shrewd either to despise or neglect? Whatever is good in their systems, they derive from a Revelation which they affect to contemn. They are rich only from what they steal, not from that property which they may call their own. Reason, which could in no wise discover what Christianity has taught, is glad to adopt, while she disavows, what she could never have found out herself. She has, however, too little honesty, and too much pride, to acknowledge

her obligation to the source from which she draws. She mixes up what she best likes with her own materials, and defies the world, by separating them, to detect the cheat. Revelation, in truth, has improved reason, as well as perfected morals.

But if the human reasoner despises Christianity, some Christians are too much disposed to vilify reason. This contempt they did not learn of Saint Paul. He never taught, that to neglect an exact method of reasoning would make men sounder divines. No such consequences can be deduced from his writings. Revealed religion, indeed, happily for the poor and illiterate, may be firmly believed, and vitally understood, without a very accurate judgment, or any high cultivation of the rational powers. But without both, without a thorough acquaintance with the arguments, without a knowledge of the evidences, it can never be successfully defended. Ignorance on these points would throw such a weight into the scale of scepticism, as would weaken, if it did not betray, the cause of truth. In our days an ignorant teacher of religion is "a workman that *needeth* to be ashamed." He should carefully cultivate his reason, were it only to convince himself of its imperfection. The more he proceeds under the guidance of God's Spirit to improve his rational faculties, the more he will discover their insufficiency; and his humility striking its root more

deeply as his knowledge shoots higher, he will become more profoundly thankful for that Divine revelation, which alone can satisfy the desires of his mind, and fill the cravings of his heart.

Some well-meaning instructors have pleaded, in justification of their low attainments, Saint Paul's exaltation of "the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."—"It was," says a learned divine, "a mode not unusual with Saint Paul, to call a thing, not by a term descriptive of its real nature, but by a name expressive of the opinion formed of it by the world, and of the effects produced by it."—In calling the Gospel foolishness, therefore, he only adopted the language of the Greeks, its pagan enemies. It was "the natural man," to whom the things of the Spirit of God were foolishness. The expression, therefore, offers no apology for nonsense, no plea for ignorance. However the humility of Paul might lead him to depreciate "the wisdom of his own words," he has left us the means of knowing that they were of the very first excellence. He depreciates, it is true, all eloquence, whether true or false, which was adopted as a substitute "for the cross of Christ." He would indeed reprobate the idea of loading a discourse with ornaments, which might draw the attention of the audience from the Saviour to the preacher, which by its splendour might cast into shade the object he was bound to reveal; which might

throw into the back-ground that Cross which should ever be the prominent figure. But though, in establishing the doctrine of the Cross, God accomplished a promise of long-standing, and frequent repetition, that he would "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent," yet there is no promise that ignorance or folly shall be erected on the ruins of wisdom; the promise runs that the wisdom from above shall supersede the pride of human wisdom.

One of the fundamental truths which the Apostle labours to establish is, that the attainment of Divine knowledge, progress in holiness, conquest over sin, with all other spiritual gains, are to be effected only by the power of the Spirit of God. This doctrine, the importance of which he every where intimates, he more explicitly teaches in the eighth chapter of Romans. This conviction, which he felt deeply, he paints forcibly. Yet, though insisted on with such frequency and emphasis, many receive this as a speculative dogma, instead of a highly practical truth. Many distrust the reality of this power, or, if they allow its existence, they disbelieve its agency.

This tenet, however, so slightly regarded, is in every part of the New Testament not barely noticed by allusion, but incessantly either peremptorily asserted or constantly assumed. Would the Apostle repeatedly refer us, as the

only deliverer from sin, to an ideal person? Would he mock us by a bare statement of such a power, and an unmeaning promise of such a deliverance, without directing us how it is to be obtained? The fervent habitual prayer of faith is the mean suggested. It is rational to suppose that spiritual aid must be attained by a spiritual act. God is a spirit. Spirit and truth are the requisites expected in his worshippers. Though this doctrine is insisted on not less than *twelve times* in this chapter only, there is not one tenet of Christianity, in the adoption of which, the generality are more reluctant. As the Messiah was the great promise of the Old Testament, so is the Holy Spirit of the New.

It is unreasonable for us to say, we disbelieve the possibility of the operation of the Holy Spirit, because we do not understand when, or in what manner, it acts, while we remain in such complete ignorance how our own spirits act within ourselves. It is proof sufficient, that we see its result, that we perceive the effect of this mysterious operation, in the actual change of the human heart. Our sense of our internal weakness must convince us, that it is not effected by any power of our own. The humble cannot but feel this truth, the ingenuous cannot but acknowledge it. Let us be assured, that Infinite Wisdom, which knows how we are constituted, and what are our

wants, knows how his own spirit assists those who earnestly implore its aid.

Saint Paul powerfully inculcates that new and spiritual worship which was so condescendingly and beautifully taught by the Divine Teacher, at the well of Sychar, when he declared that the splendours of the Temple worship, hitherto performed exclusively in one distinguished place, should be abolished, and the cumbrous ceremonies and fatiguing forms of the Jewish ritual set aside, to make way for a purer mode of adoration; when the contrite heart was to supersede the costly sacrifice, and God should be worshipped in a way more suited to his spiritual nature. *

Yet, even here, the wise moderation of Paul is visible. He did not manifest his dislike of one extreme point by flying to the antipodes of opposition: when ostentatious rites were pronounced to be no longer necessary, he did not adopt, like some other reformers, the contrary excess of irregularity and confusion. While the internal principle was the grand concern, the outward appendage must be decorous. To keep the exterior "decent" and "orderly," was emblematical of the purity and regularity within!

While Saint Paul's severe reproof of the confusion and irregularities which disgraced the

* Gospel of St. John, chap. iv.

church of Corinth proves him to be a decided enemy to the distempers of spiritual vanity and enthusiasm, he does not, like a worldly reprover, seize the occasion given by their imprudence to treat with levity the power of religion itself: he does not lay hold on the error he condemns for a pretence to deride true zeal, and to render ridiculous the gifts which had been indecently abused. On the contrary, he observes how improperly these gifts and supernatural powers had been used by some on whom they were conferred; who, he laments, were more anxious to eclipse each other in these showy distinctions, than to convert them to the purposes of practical use and excellence: he advises, that "spiritual gifts" may be directed to their true end; "that ye may excel to the edifying of the church:" gently reminds the offenders, that they themselves were nothing more than vehicles and organs of the operation of the Spirit. * While he insinuates that, were these miraculous powers their sole distinction, it might be doubtful by what specific mark to recognise in them the genuine Christian, he removes the difficulty, by showing them there *was a more excellent way*, by which they might most indisputably make out their title. This "way," which is now, as it was then, the discriminating characteristic of the true believer, is Charity; all the properties

* 1 Corinthians, xii.

of which he describes, not for their instruction only, but for ours also.

If the Apostle has here, on the one hand, furnished no example or apology for enthusiasm and eccentricity; if the solidity of his piety, and the sobriety of his mind, are uniformly opposed to the unprofitable fervours of fanaticism, both in doctrine and conduct, yet, on the other hand, his life and writings are quite as little favourable to a more formidable, because a less suspected and more common evil, — we mean indifference. Coldness and inefficiency, indeed, are, in the estimation of some persons, reputable, or at least safe qualities, and often obtain the honourable name of prudence; but to Saint Paul it was not enough that nothing wrong was done; he considered it reproach sufficient, that nothing was done.

He sometimes intrenches himself in the honest severity which his integrity compels him to exercise against the opposers of vital Christianity, by adducing some pointed censure against them from men of their own party or country. For instance, when he condemns, in his letter to their new bishop, Titus, the luxurious, avaricious, and slothful Cretans, he corroborates the truth of his testimony by the authority of one of their own poets, or "prophets." These slow sensualists, these indulgers of appetite, these masters of ceremonies, he not only stigmatises himself, but adds to his pagan

quotation, "this witness is true." * And it may be adduced as a striking instance of his discriminating mode of church government, that this wise ecclesiastical ruler, who had before exhorted Timothy, the bishop of another church, to "be gentle unto all men, meekly instructing those who oppose themselves," now directs Titus to "rebuke sharply" these temporising teachers, and unholy livers.

He saw that a grave and sedate indolence, investing itself with the respectable attribute of moderation, eats out the very heart's core of piety. He knew that these somnolent characters communicate the repose which they enjoy; that they excite no alarm, because they feel none. Their tale of observances is regularly brought in; their list of forms is completely made out. Forms, it is true, are valuable things, when they are "used as a dead hedge to secure the quick;" but here the observances are rested in; here the forms are the whole of the fence. The dead fence is not considered as a protection, but a substitute. The teacher and the taught, neither disturbing nor disturbed, but soothing and soothed, reciprocate civilities, exchange commendations. If little good is done, it is well; if no offence is given, it is better; if no superfluity of zeal be imputed, it is best of all. The Apostle felt what the Prophet expressed,—"My people love to have it so."

* Titus, i.

Perhaps the sum and substance of the duties of a Christian minister, to which there is also a reference in this chapter, was never compressed into so small a compass as in his charge to his beloved Titus *; — "In all things showing *thyself a pattern of good works. In doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech.*" We see here, in a few significant words, a rule of conduct and of instruction which is susceptible of the widest expansion. The most elaborate paraphrase will add little to the substantial worth of this brief monition. Every instructor must furnish his own practical commentary by transferring into his life the pattern, and into his preaching the precept. He adds, the sure effect of a life and doctrine so correct will be to silence calumny; the adversary of religion will be ashamed of his enmity when he sees the purity of its professor defeat all attempts to discredit him.

It is a truth, verified in every age of the Church, that the doctrines which Saint Paul preached stood in direct opposition to the natural dispositions of man; they militated against his corrupt affections; they tended to subdue what had been hitherto invincible, — the stubborn human will; to plant self-denial, where self-love had before overrun the ground. To convince of sin, to point to the Saviour, to

* Titus, ii.

perfect holiness, yet to exclude boasting, are the Apostle's invariable objects. These topics he urges by every power of argument, by every charm of persuasion; by every injunction to the preacher, by every motive to the hearer; but these injunctions, neither argument, persuasion, nor motive, can ever render engaging. Man loves to have his corruptions soothed; it is the object of the Apostle to combat them: man would have his errors indulged; it is the object of the religion which Paul preached to eradicate them.

Of the dislike excited against the loyal ambassadors of the Gospel, by those who live in opposition to its doctrines, our common experience furnishes us with no unapt emblem. When we have a piece of unwelcome news to report, we prepare the hearer by a soothing introduction; we break his fall by some softening circumstance; we invent some conciliatory preamble: he listens; he distrusts; — but we arrive at the painful truth; — the secret is out, the preparation is absorbed in the reality, the evil remains in its full force; nothing but the painful fact is seen, heard, or felt.

"Thy news hath made thee a most ugly man!"

The Apostle knew that it would afford little comfort to the humble Christian to talk of the mercy of God in the abstract, and the forgiveness of sins in vague and general terms. He

persuades the believer to endeavour to obtain evidence of his own interest in this great salvation. The fountain of forgiveness may flow, but if the current reach not to us, if we have no personal interest in the offered redemption, if we do not individually seek communion with the Father of spirits, the Saviour of the world will not be our Saviour. But that he might not give false comfort, Paul, when he wishes "peace," wishes "grace" also; this last he always places first in order, knowing that, before the peace can be solid, it must have grace for its precursor. The character of the peace which he recommends is of the highest order of blessings. The peace which nations make with each other frequently includes no more than that they will do each other no evil, but "the peace of God" insures to us all that is good, by keeping our hearts and minds in the love and knowledge of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ.

In regard to Saint Paul's ecclesiastical polity, we are aware that some persons, with a view to lower the general usefulness of his Epistles, object, that in many instances, especially in the first to the Corinthians, the Apostle has limited his instructions to usages which relate only to the peculiar concerns of a particular church or individual person, and that they might have been spared in a work meant for general edification.

But these are not, as some insist, mere local

controversies, obsolete disputes, with which we have no concern. Societies, as well as the individuals of whom they are composed, are much the same in all periods; and though the contentions of the churches which he addressed might differ something in matter, and much in form and ceremony, from those of modern date, yet the spirit of division, of animosity, of error, of opposition, with which all churches are more or less infected, will have such a common resemblance in all ages, as may make us submit to take a hint or a caution even from topics which may seem foreign to our concerns; and it adds to the value of Saint Paul's expostulations, that they may be made in some degree applicable to other cases. His directions are minute, as well as general, so as scarcely to leave any of the incidents of life, or the exigencies of society, totally unprovided for.

There are, it is obvious, certain things which refer to particular usages of the general church at its first institution, which no longer exist. There are frequent references to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and other circumstances, which though they have now ceased, are of great importance as connected with its history, and assisting in its first formation; and the writer who had neglected to have recorded them would have been blamable, and the Epistles which had not alluded to them would have been imperfect.

While the Apostle made adequate provisions, such as the existing case required, or rather permitted, he did not absolutely legislate, as to external things, for any church; wisely leaving Christianity at liberty to incorporate herself with the laws of any country into which she might be introduced; and while the doctrines of the new religion were precise, distinct, and definite, its ecclesiastical character was of that generalised nature which would allow it to mix with any form of national government. This was a likely means both to promote its extension, and to prevent it from imbibing a political temper, or a spirit of interference with the secular concerns of any country.

The wonder is, that the work is so little local, that it savours so little of Antioch or Jerusalem, of Philippi or Corinth; but that almost all is of such general application: relative circumstances did indeed operate, but they always operated subordinately. The Epistle to the Ephesians is not marked with one local peculiarity. There is not a single deduction to be made from the universal applicableness of this elegant and powerful epitome of the Gospel.

Saint Paul belongs not particularly to the period in which he lived, but is equally the property of each successive race of beings. Time does not diminish their interest in him. He is as fresh to every century as to his own; and the truths he preaches will be as intimately con-

nected with that age which shall precede the dissolution of the world as with that in which he wrote. The sympathies of the real believer will always be equally awakened by doctrines which will equally apply to their consciences, by principles which will always have a reference to their practice, by promises which will always carry consolation to their hearts. By the Christians of all countries, Paul will be considered as a cosmopolite, and by those of all ages as a contemporary. Even when he addresses individuals, his point of view is mankind. He looked to the world as his scene, and to collective man as the actor.

CHAP. X.

THE STYLE AND GENIUS OF SAINT PAUL.

THOUGH Saint Paul frequently alludes to the variety of his sufferings, yet he never dwells upon them. He does not take advantage of the liberty so allowable in friendly letters, — that of endeavouring to excite compassion by those minute details of distress, of which, but for their relation in the Acts of the Apostles, we should have been mainly ignorant.

How would any other writer than the Apostle have interwoven a full statement of his trials with his instructions, and how would he have indulged an egotism, not only so natural and so pardonable, but which has been so acceptable in those good men who have given us Histories of their own Life and Times! That intermixture, however, which excites so lively an interest, and is so proper in Clarendon and Baxter, would have been misplaced here. It would have served to gratify curiosity, but might not seem to comport with the grave plan of instruction adopted by the Apostle; whilst it comes with admirable grace from Saint Luke, his companion in travel.

Saint Paul's manner of writing will be found in every way worthy of the greatness of his subject. His powerful and diversified character of mind seems to have combined the separate excellencies of all the other sacred authors: — the loftiness of Isaiah, the devotion of David, the pathos of Jeremiah, the vehemence of Ezekiel, the didactic gravity of Moses, the elevated morality and practical good sense, though much more highly coloured, of Saint James, the sublime conceptions and deep views of Saint John, the noble energies and burning zeal of Saint Peter. To all these he added his own strong argumentative powers, depth of thought, and intensity of feeling. In every single department he was eminently gifted; so that what Livy said of Cato might with far greater truth have been asserted of Saint Paul, — that you would think him born for the single thing in which he was engaged.

We have observed, in an early chapter, that in the Evangelists the naked majesty of truth refused to owe any thing to the artifices of composition. In Saint Paul's Epistles, a due, though less strict, degree of simplicity is observed; differing in style from the other, as the comment from the text, a letter from a history; taking the same ground as to doctrine, devotion, and duty, yet branching out into a wider range, breaking the subject into more parts, and iving results instead of facts.

Though more at liberty, Saint Paul makes a sober use of his privilege: though never ambitious of ornament, his style is as much varied as his subject, and always adapted to it. He is by turns vehement and tender, and sometimes both at once; impassioned and didactic; now pursuing his point with a logical exactness, now disdaining the rules, of which he was a master; often making his noble neglect more impressive than the most correct arrangement, his irregularity more touching than the most lucid order. He is frequently abrupt, and sometimes obscure: his reasoning, though generally clear, is, as the best critics allow, sometimes involved, perhaps owing to the suddenness of his transitions, the rapidity of his ideas, the sensibility of his soul.

But complicated as his meaning may occasionally appear, all his complications are capable of being analysed into principles; so that from his most intricate trains of reasoning, the most unlearned reader may select an unconnected maxim of wisdom, a position of piety, an aphorism of virtue, easy from its brevity, intelligible from its clearness, and valuable from its weight.

An apparent, though not unpleasing, disconnection in his sentences is sometimes found to arise from the absence of the conjunctive parts of speech. He is so affluent in ideas, the images which crowd in upon him are so thick-set, that he could not stop their course while he might tie them together. This absence of the con-

necting link, which in a meaner writer might have induced a want of perspicuity, adds energy and force to the expression of so spirited and clear-sighted a writer as our Apostle. In the sixth chapter of the second of Corinthians, there are six consecutive verses without one conjunction. Such a particle would have enfeebled the spirit, without clearing the sense. The variety which these verses, all making up but one period, exhibit, the mass of thought, the diversity of object, the impetuosity of march, make it impossible to read them without catching something of the fervour with which they are written. They seem to set the pulse in motion with a corresponding quickness; and without amplification, seem to expand the mind of the reader into all the immensity of space and time.

Nothing is diffused into weakness. If his conciseness may be thought, in a very few instances, to take something from his clearness, it is more than made up in force. Condensed as his thoughts are, the inexhaustible instruction that may be deduced from them proves of what expansion they are susceptible. His compression has an energy, his imagery a spirit, his diction an impetuosity, which art would in vain labour to mend. His straight-forward sense makes his way to the heart more surely than theirs who go out of their road for ornament. He never interrupts the race to pick up the golden bait.

Our Apostle, when he has not leisure for reflection himself, almost by imperceptible methods invites his reader to reflect. When he appears only to skim a subject, he will suggest ample food for long-dwelling meditation. Every sentence is pregnant with thought, is abundant in instruction. Witness the many thousands of sermons which have sprung from these comparatively few, but most prolific seeds. Thus, if he does not visibly pursue the march of eloquence by the critic's path, he never fails to attain its noblest ends. He is full without diffuseness, copious without redundance. His eloquence is not a smooth and flowing oil, which lubricates the surface, but a sharp instrument which makes a deep incision. It penetrates to the dissection of the inmost soul, "to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

The numerous and long digressions often found, and sometimes complained of, in this great writer, never make him lose sight of the point from which he sets out, and the mark to which he is tending. From his most discursive flights he never fails to bring home some added strength to the truth with which he begins; and when he is longest on the wing, or loftiest in his ascent, he comes back to the subject, enriched with additional matter, and animated with redoubled vigour. This is particularly exempli-

fied in the third chapter of the Ephesians, of which the whole is one entire parenthesis, eminently abounding in effusions of humility, holiness, and love, and in the rich display of the Redeemer's grace. — "For this cause I bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his grace, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

In the prosecution of any discourse, though there may appear little method, he has frequently, besides the topic immediately in hand, some point to bring forward, not directly, but in an incidental yet most impressive manner. At the moment when he seems to wander from the direct line of his pursuit, the object which he still has had in his own view, unexpectedly starts up before that of his hearer. In the recapitulation of the events of his life before Festus and Agrippa, when nothing of doctrine appears to be on his mind, he suddenly breaks out, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" He then

resumes his narrative as rapidly as he had flown off from it; but returns to his doctrine at the close with the additional circumstance, that "Christ was the first that should rise from the dead;"— as if, having before put the question in the abstract, he had been since paving the way for the establishment of the fact.

Saint Paul is happy in a mode of brief allusion, and in the art of awakening recollection by hints. It is observable often, how little time he wastes in narrative, and how much matter he presses into a few words: "Ye, brethren, have suffered the like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, — forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; to fill up their sins always — for the wrath is come upon them to the utmost." What a quantity of history does this sketch present! What a picture of their character, their crimes, and their punishment!

Nor does his brevity often trench on his explicitness. In the fifth chapter of the first of Thessalonians, from the fourteenth to the twentieth verse, there are no fewer than seventeen fundamental, moral, and religious monitions, comprising almost all the duties of a Christian life in the space of a few lines. The selection of his words is as apt, as his enumera-

tion of duties is just. He *beseeches* his converts "to know them that are over them, and very highly to esteem them in love for their works' sake;" while to the performance of every personal, social, and religious duty, he *exhorts* them.

The correctness of his judgment appears still more visibly in the aptness and propriety of all his allusions, metaphors, and figures. In his Epistle to the Hebrews he illustrates and enforces the new doctrine by reasonings drawn from a reference to the rites, ceremonies, and economy of the now obsolete dispensation; sending them back to the records of their early Scriptures. Again, he does not talk of the Isthmian games to the Romans, nor to the Greeks of Adoption. The latter term he judiciously uses to the Romans, to whom the practice was familiar, and explains by the use of it the doctrines of the grace of God in their redemption, their adoption as his children, and their "inheritance with the saints in light." On the other hand, the illustration borrowed from the rigorous abstinence which was practised by the competitors in the Grecian games, to fit them for athletic exercises, would convey to the most illiterate inhabitant of Achaia a lively idea of the subjugation of appetite required in the Christian combatant. The close of this last-mentioned analogy by the Apostle opens a large field for instruction, by a brief

but beautiful comparison, between the value and duration of the fading garland worn by the victorious Greek, with the incorruptible crown of the Christian conqueror.

But whether it be metaphor, or illustration, or allusion, he seldom fails to draw from it some practical inference for his own humiliation. In the present case he winds up the subject with a salutary fear, in which all who are engaged in the religious instruction of others are deeply interested. So far is he from self-confidence or self-satisfaction, because he lives in the constant habit of improving others, that he adduces the very practice of this duty as a ground of caution to himself. He appropriates to himself a general possibility, "lest that by any means when I have preached to others, *I myself* should be a castaway."

Another metaphor, to which for its peculiarity we cannot help making a distinct reference, occurs in the twelfth chapter of the first of Corinthians. The figure with which he there instructs the church of Corinth in the nature, use, and variety of spiritual gifts, whilst it bears a strong resemblance to the celebrated apologue with which Menenius Agrippa appeased the tumult of the Roman populace in the infancy of the Consular government, is still much superior to it. Saint Paul reproves their dissensions in a long chain of argument, where he illustrates the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in his distribu-

tion of gifts, by a similitude taken from the component parts of the human body; which, though distinct and various, make up by union one harmonious whole. He explains their incorporation into Christ by the interest which the body has in the several members, each of which by its specific office contributes to the general good. He proves the excellence of the dispensation to consist in that very variety which had produced the contention; and shows that, had the same powers been given to all, the union would have been broken, as each portion would have been useless in a state of detachment from the rest, which now contributed to the general organisation of the human frame.

As an orator, Saint Paul unquestionably stands in the foremost rank. When the renowned Athenian so "wielded the fierce democracy," as to animate with one common sentiment the whole assembly against Philip; —when his great rival stirred up the Roman senate against their oppressors, and by the power of his eloquence made Catiline contemptible, and Anthony detestable; — they had every thing in their favour. Their character was established: each held a distinguished office in the state. They stood on the vantage-ground of the highest rank and reputation. When they spoke, admiration stood waiting to applaud. Their characters commanded attention. Their subject insured approbation. Each, too, had

the advantage of addressing his own friends, his own countrymen — men of the same religious and political habits with themselves. Before they started, they had already pre-occupied half the road to success and glory.

Now turn to Paul! — A stranger, poor, persecuted, unprotected, unsupported — despised before-hand, whether he were considered as a Jew or a Christian; solitary, defenceless, degraded even to chains; — yet did he make the prejudiced king vacillate in his opinion, the unjust judge tremble on his seat. The Apostle of the Gentiles owed none of his success to an appeal to the corrupt passions of his audience. Demosthenes and Cicero, it must be confessed, by their arguments and their eloquence, but not a little also by their railing and invective, kindled strong emotions in the minds of their respective audiences. Now these vituperations, it must be remembered, were applied to *other* persons, not to the hearers, — and men find a wonderful facility in admiring satire not directed at themselves. But in the case of Saint Paul, the very persons addressed were at once the accused and the judges. The auditors were to apply the searching truths to their own hearts; to look inward on the mortifying spectacle of their own errors and vices: so that the Apostle had the feelings of the hearers completely against him, whilst the pagan orator had those of his audience already on his side.

To crown all, Saint Paul has nobly exemplified the rule of Quinctilian. He owed the best part of his oratory to his being "a good man," as well as a good speaker. Otherwise, says that great critic, "though the orator may amuse the imagination, he will never reach the heart."

Conviction was the soul of his eloquence. He has no hesitation in his religious discussions. Whenever he summoned the attributes of his mind to council, decision always presided. His doctrines had a fixed system. There was nothing conjectural in his scheme. His mind was never erratic for want of a centre. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, — with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning, — is the sun of his system; and round this centre every doctrine issuing from his lips, every grace beaming in his soul, moved harmoniously. Whilst he did not, like the exploded philosophy, invert order, by making the orb of day dependent on the lesser fires, which owe to him whatever light and heat they possess, he did not shrink, like the restorer of astronomical truth, from the most decisive and effectual avowal of his opinions. It is curious to observe, that both these persons shared a similar fate. The astronomer was rewarded for his discoveries with being thrown into a prison by a pontiff of Rome: — for the diffusion of moral light, the Apostle was thrown into a prison by an emperor of Rome. But mark, in the sequel, the superior influence of

revealed truth over the conduct, to that of the clearest and best founded deductions of human reason. The philosopher was irresolute; the Apostle persevered. Copernicus recanted what he knew to be truth, and was set free; Paul disdained liberty upon such terms, and was put to death.

This resolute avowal, this predominant conviction of the sublimest of truths, enabled Saint Paul to throw into his eloquence a heart and a life unknown to other orators: "as a dying man, he spoke to dying men;" and pleaded to the feelings of immortal beings for the life of their souls. Others have selected noble objects, objects well worthy their genius and their zeal, — the love of their country, liberty, and life. Paul embraced the same topics, but how ennobled in their nature! He taught his hearers "to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly." He showed them "the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free." He pointed them to "life everlasting."

In the various counsels or reproofs, founded upon these Divine doctrines, can we be surprised at the frequent interruption of an ejaculation or an apostrophe, which he seems wholly unable to repress? Often do we participate those feelings which, as it were, break in upon his most subdued moments, and impel him to magnify that name, which is above every name, with every ascription of glory, and honour,

and praise, and sainted adoration. With a kindred joy and elevation of soul, we seem to make even the most highly-wrought devotional and practical effusions of so great a writer our own; and so far from coldly condemning what we almost believe our own conception, we realise something of the observation of the finest critic of antiquity, "that when the mind is raised by the true sublime, it rejoices and glories as if itself had produced what it has so much delight in contemplating."—"No real Christian," says Macknight, "can read the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Ephesians, without being impressed and roused by it, as by the sound of a trumpet."

David, between whose temper and genius, and those of Saint Paul, there seems to have been a great resemblance, frequently manifests the same inextinguishable energy of soul. His heart, like that of the Apostle, is hot within him; the fire burns while he is musing. Many of the Psalms, under such an influence, become only one varied strain of laudatory prayer. In the nineteenth, for instance, he breaks out in admiration of the Divine law, almost to appearance on a sudden, and in such an inexhaustible diversity of expression, as if he could never unburden the fulness of his overflowing heart. He describes it in no less than six different forms of perfection; and with every form, still resembling his great fellow-saint of after-ages,

he connects a practical deduction. Thus by infinite variety he proves that his mental opulence is above tautology, and at the same time shows that spiritual riches should be devoted to moral purposes. "The law of the Lord so extolled, converts the soul, — gives wisdom to the simple, — rejoices the heart, — gives light to the eyes, — is not only true, but righteous altogether."

If Saint Paul indulges the glowing expression of his own gratitude, it is to communicate the sacred flame to those whom he addresses: if he triumphs in "the enlargement of his own heart," it is because he hopes by the infection of a holy sympathy to enlarge theirs. In catching, however, the sacred flame, let us never forget that, in his warmest addresses, in his most ardent expressions of grateful love to his God and his Saviour, he never loses sight of that soberness and gravity which become both his subject and his character. It is *the King eternal, immortal, invisible — the blessed and only Potentate — King of kings, Lord of lords, — He, who hath immortality — who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto, — He, who hath honour and power everlasting, to* whom, and *of* whom, he feels himself to speak.

May we venture to express a wish, that some persons of more piety than discernment, amongst whom there are those who value themselves on being more particularly the disciples of Saint

Paul, would always imitate his chastised language. When the Apostle pours out the fulness of his heart to his Redeemer, every expression is as full of veneration as of love. His freedom is a filial freedom, while *their* devout effusions are sometimes mixed with epithets, which betray a familiarity bordering on irreverence. *

"If I am a father, where is mine honour? if I am a master, where is my fear?" They may indeed say with truth that they are invited to come *boldly* to the throne of grace. But does not the very word Throne imply majesty on the one part, and prostration on the other? Is not "God manifest in the flesh" sometimes treated with a freedom, I had almost said, a fondness, in which the divine part of his nature seems to be swallowed up in the human? Coarseness, of whatever kind, may, it is true, be palliated by piety, but is never countenanced by it: it has no affinity to piety; it is only as the iron and the clay at the foot of the magnificent image, and is just so far removed from the true refinement and golden sanctity of taste, which will be learned by a due study of the first of models. If the persons so offending should plead warmth of affection, their plea will be admitted as valid, if in this feeling they can prove their superiority to their great exemplar. In our own admirable

* This remark applies more particularly to certain Hymns written in a very devout strain, but with a devotion rather amatory than reverential.

church service, this scriptural soberness of style is most judiciously adopted, and uniformly maintained. Portions of it are indeed addressed to the Second Person in the blessed Trinity, but we look in vain for any familiar expression, any diminishing appellative.

Much less do Saint Paul's writings present an example to another and more elegant class, the learned speculatists of the German school, as recently presented to us by their eloquent and accomplished eulogist. Some of these have fallen into the opposite extreme of religious refinement; too airy to be tangible, too mystic to be intelligible. The Apostle's religion is not like theirs, a shadowy sentiment, but a vital principle; not a matter of taste, but of conviction, of faith, of feeling. It is not a fair idea, but a holy affection. The deity at which they catch is a gay and gorgeous cloud; Paul's is the Fountain of Light. His religion is definite and substantial, and more profound than splendid. It is not a panegyric on Christianity, but a homage to it. He is too devout to be ingenious, too earnest to be fanciful, too humble to be inventive. His sober mind could discern no analogy between the sublime truths of Christianity and "the fine arts." Nor would he have compared the awful mysteries of the religion of Jesus with those of "Free Masonry," any more than he would have run a laboured parallel with the mysteries of Eleusis, or the

Bona Dea. Nor does he love to illustrate the word of God by any thing but his works. His truth has no shades; in Him whatever is right is absolute. Nor does he ever make error perform the work of truth by ascribing to "enthusiasm" any of the good effects of religion. In the celestial armoury of Christianity no such spiritual weapons as enthusiasm or error are to be found.

Had the Apostle placed the doctrines of revelation as congenial associates with the talents of poets and artists, he would have thought not only that it was a degradation of the principle of our faith, but an impeachment of the Divine dispensations. God would have all men to be saved; Christ would have the Gospel preached to every creature. Now if we compare the very small minority of etherial spirits, who are fed by genius, who subsist on the luxuries of imagination, who are nurtured by music, who revel in poetry and sculpture, with the innumerable multitudes who have scarcely heard whether there be any such things — such a limited, such a whimsical, such an unintelligible, such an unattainable Christianity, would rob the mass of mankind of all present comfort, of all future hope. Saint Paul would have thought it a mockery, when the Holy Spirit could alone help their infirmities, to have sent them to the Muses. To refer them to the statuary when they were craving for the bread of life, would be literally "giving them

stones for bread." Nor would he have derided the wants of those who were "thirsting for living water," by sending them to the fountain of Aganippe.

To be more serious:—To have placed the vast majority of the human race out of the reach of privileges which Christianity professes to have made commensurate with the very ends of the earth, and to have adapted to every rational inhabitant on its surface, would have been as base and treacherous, unjust and narrow, as the totality of the actual design is vast and glorious.

Even had those few eminent men, who ruled the empire of intellect in Greece and Rome, attained, by the influence of their philosophical doctrines, to perfection in practice (which was far from being the case), that would neither have advanced the general faith, nor improved the popular morals. In like manner, had Christianity limited its principles, and their consequent benefits, to evangelists and apostles, or to men of genius, how insignificant would have been her value in comparison of the effects of that boundless benevolence which commands the Gospel to be preached to all, without any distinction of rank or ability! Through this blessed provision, the poorest Christian, rich in faith, can, equally with Boyle or Bacon, relish the beauty of holiness in the pages of Saint Paul, though he may not be rich enough in taste to discover its "picturesque beauties," as exhibited in

the pages of some modern philosophic theologians.

Christianity is not the triumph of intellect, but of grace. It is a religion, not of ingenuity, but of obedience. As we must not omit any thing which God has commanded, so we must not invent devices which he does *not* command. The talent of a certain Lacedæmonian was not accepted as an excuse, when he added to his warlike instrument a string more than the state allowed. Instead of being commended for his invention, he was cashiered for his disobedience; so far from being rewarded for improving his music, he was punished for infringing the law.

Much were it to be wished, that these deep thinkers and brilliant writers, to whom we allude with every consideration for their talents, would make their immense mental riches subservient to their spiritual profit: and as Solon made his commercial voyages the occasion of amassing his vast intellectual treasures, so that *they* would consecrate their literary wealth, and devote their excursions into the regions of fancy, to the acquisition of the one pearl of great price.

Too often persons of fine genius, to whom Christianity begins to present itself, do not so much seek to penetrate its depths, where alone they are to be explored, in the unerring word of God, as in their own pullulating imaginations. Their taste and their pursuits have familiarised them with the vast, and the grand, and the interesting;

and they think to sanctify these in a way of their own. The *feeling of the Infinite* in nature, and the beautiful in art; the flights of poetry, of love, of glory, alternately elevate their imagination; and they denominate the splendid combination, Christianity. But "the new cloth" will never assort with "the old garment."

These elegant spirits seem to live in a certain lofty region in their own minds, where they know the multitude cannot soar after them; they derive their grandeur from this elevation, which separates them with the creature of their imagination, from all ordinary attributes, and all associations of daily occurrence. In this middle region, too high for earth, and too low for heaven; too refined for sense, and too gross for spirit; they keep a magazine of airy speculations and shining reveries, and puzzling metaphysics; the chief design of which is to drive to a distance the profane vulgar; but the real effect, to separate themselves and their system from all intercourse with the wise and good.

God could never intend that we should disparage his own gift, his highest natural gift, intellectual excellence. But knowing that those who possessed it would be sufficiently forward, not only to value the talent, but to overvalue themselves for possessing it, he knew also that its possessors would require rather repression than excitement. Accordingly, we do not recollect any eulogy on mere intellectual ability

either in the Old or the New Testament. In the Old, indeed, there is the severe censure of a Prophet on its vain exercise; "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge have perverted thee:" and in the New, the only mention of "high imaginations" is accompanied with an injunction, "to cast them down," and this in order to the great and practical end of "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Saint Paul was deeply sensible of the necessity of circumscribing the passsions, the powers, and the genius of men within due limits. He knew that they were not to be trusted to their own operation, without positive institutions, fixed laws, prescribed bounds. To subdue the pride and independence of the human heart, he knew to be no less requisite than to tame the sensual appetites. He was aware, that to fill the imagination with mere pictures of heroic virtue would not suffice for a creature like man, under the influence of that disorderly and inflammable faculty, without the infusion of holy habits, and the prescription of specific duties and defined rules. In fine, the disciple of Saint Paul learns not so much to give play to his fancy, as to submit his will; and the first question which seems presented in his page is not this, "How bright are thy conceptions?" but "How readest thou?"

The subject is too important, as a matter of caution, not to be placed in every possible light.

Let us remember, then, that admiration is not conviction. There is something in perfection of every kind, which lays hold on a heart glowing with strong feeling, and a mind imbued with true taste. On this ground, even Rousseau could be the occasional eulogist of Christianity. He could institute a comparison between the son of Sophroniscus and the Son of Mary, with a pen, which seems plucked by the fallen spirit from a seraph's wing. His fine imagination was fired with the sublime of Christianity, as it would have been with a dialogue of Plato, a picture of Raffaelle, or any exhibition of ideal beauty.

Longinus, a still more accomplished critic in intellectual beauty than Rousseau, amongst the various illustrations of his doctrine in his beautiful work, quotes the Almighty fiat at the creation, "Let there be light, and there was light," as a perfect instance of the Sublime. He calls it "a just idea, and a noble expression of the power of God." Yet, though struck with this passage of the Jewish legislator, whom he coolly calls "no ordinary person," he was satisfied with the beauty of the sentiment, without examining into that truth which is the spring and fountain of all beauty. Though he lived so late as the third century, yet he does not appear to have enquired into the truth of the Christian revelation; and thus but too lamentably demonstrated, that the taste may give its

most favourable verdict to a system which had yet made no impression on the heart.

Saint Paul found in the wants of man something that could not be supplied; in his sorrows, something that could not be consoled; in his lapse, something that could not be restored by elegant speculation or poetic rapture. He found that the wounds inflicted by sin could not be healed by the grace of composition; and that nothing but the grace of the Gospel could afford a remedy adequate to the demand. Let us, then, give our willing admiration to every species of true genius. Let us retain our taste for what is really excellent even in heathen models. But when called upon to identify the impressions of taste with the infusions of piety, let us boldly reply, with the Prophet, "What has Ephraim to do any more with idols?"

CHAP. XI.

SAINT PAUL'S TENDERNESS OF HEART.

AMONG the peculiarities of Christianity, it is one of the most striking, that they who, in Scripture language, love not the world, nor the things of the world, are yet the persons in it who are farthest from misanthropes. They love the beings of whom the world is composed, better than he who courts and flatters it. They seek not its favour nor its honours, but they give a more substantial proof of affection, — they seek its improvement, its peace, its happiness, its salvation.

If ever man, on this ground, had a pre-eminent claim to the title of philanthropist, that man is the Apostle Paul. The warmth of his affections, as exhibited in a more general view in the narative of Saint Luke, and the tenderness of his feelings, as they appear more detailed throughout his own Epistles, constitute a most interesting part of his very diversified character.

This truth is obvious, not only on great and extraordinary occasions, but in the common circumstances of his life, and from the usual tenour of his letters.

There are persons, not a few, who, though truly pious, defeat much of the good they intend to do, not always by a natural severity of temper, but by a repulsiveness of manner, by not cultivating habits of courtesy, by a neglect of the smaller lenient arts of kindness. They will indeed confer the obligation, but they confer it in such a manner as grieves and humbles him who receives it. In fulfilling the letter of charity, they violate its spirit. We would not willingly suspect, that if they are more averse from bestowing commendation, than from receiving it, a little envy, unsuspected by themselves, mixes with this reluctance. But be this as it may, tender spirits and feeling hearts, especially in the first stages of their religious course, require the fostering aid of kindness and encouragement. They are not able to go alone, they need the soothing voice and the helping hand. They are ready to suspect that they are going wrong, if not occasionally encouraged to believe that they are going right.

History presents us with numberless instances in which the success or the failure of great enterprises has depended, not altogether on the ability, but partly on the temper of him who conducted it. The importance of conciliatory and engaging manners is no where more strikingly illustrated than by the opposite conduct and different success of two famous Athenian generals. Plutarch observes, that though Peri-

cles and Nicias both pursued the same end; the former, in the progress of his purpose, always won the people by his kind and insinuating address; while the latter, not employing the mild powers of persuasion, exasperated instead of winning them over, and thus commonly failed in his enterprise.

Saint Paul's consummate knowledge of human nature, no less than his tenderness of heart, led him to encourage in his young converts every opening promise of goodness. He carefully cultivates every favourable symptom. He is "gentle among them as a nurse cherisheth her children." He does not expect every thing at once; he does not expect that a beginner in the ways of religion should start into instantaneous perfection. He does not think all is lost if an error is committed; he does not abandon hope, if some less happy converts are slow in their progress. He protects their budding graces, he fences his young plants till they have had time to take root; as they become strong he exposes them to the blast. If he rejoices that the hardy are more flourishing, he is glad that the less vigorous are nevertheless alive.

Characters which are great are not always amiable; the converse is equally true: in Saint Paul there is an union of both qualities. He condescends to the inferior distresses, and consults the natural feelings of his friends, as much as if no weightier cares pressed on his mind.

There is scarcely a more lovely part of his character, though it may be less striking to common eyes, as being more tender than great, than the gentleness exhibited to his Corinthian converts; where he is anxious, before he appears among them again, that any breach might be healed, and every painful feeling done away, which his sharp reproof of an offending individual might have excited. He would not have the joyfulness of their meeting overshadowed by any remaining cloud.

Though he expresses himself in the most feeling manner, lest he might have given them pain by his severe reproofs in a preceding letter, yet instantly the predominating integrity of his mind leads him to take comfort in the reflection, that this temporary sorrow had produced the most salutary effects on them who felt it. His rejoicing that the very sorrow he had excited was a religious sorrow, — his reflections on the beneficial results of this affliction, — on the repentance it had produced; — the distinction between this and worldly sorrow, — his generous energy in enumerating the several instances in which this good effect had appeared; — "yea, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear;" and the animating conclusion, that "in all things they had proved themselves to be clear in the matter;" — all afford a proof of his being on the watch to lay

hold of any possible occasion on which to build instruction, as well as to graft consolation.

No one ever possessed more nearly in perfection the virtuous art of softening the severity of the censure he is obliged to inflict; no one ever more combined flexibility of manner with inflexibility of principle. He takes off the edge of reproof by conveying it negatively. To give a single instance out of many, when he thought some of his converts had acted improperly, instead of saying I blame you, he adopts a mitigating phrase, "I praise you not." This address would prepare them to receive with more temper the censure to which it is an introduction.

Of this Christian condescension each successive example furnishes us with a most engaging and beautiful model for our own conduct. With what keen regret does he allude to the necessity under which he had been of animadverting severely on the atrocious instance of misconduct above mentioned! With what truth and justice doth he make it appear that reproofs, which are so painful to the censor, are a more certain evidence of friendship than commendations, which it would have given to him as much joy to have bestowed, as to them to have received! An important admonition to all, to those especially whose more immediate concern it is to watch over the conduct of others, that though this most trying duty should never be neglected by them, yet that the integrity which obliges

them to point out faults should be exercised in a manner so feeling as to let the offender see, that they have no pleasure in adopting harsh measures; of this truth they give the surest proof by the joy with which, like the Apostle, they welcome the returning penitent back to virtue.

Observe the delicacy of his distinctions, —he wrote to them *out of much affliction and anguish of heart;* not that he wished to grieve them by a display of his own sorrow, but that they might judge by it *of the abundant love he had for them.* Nor does he, as is the vulgar practice, blame a whole community for the faults of individuals: *I am grieved but in part, that I may not overcharge you all.* Mark his justice in separating the offending party from the mass. Is not this a hint against an indiscriminate mode of attack? Do we not occasionally hear one audience addressed as if it were composed entirely of saints, and another, as if all were grossly impenitent sinners?

Having received sufficient proofs of the obedience of the community in inflicting the punishment, and of the penitence of the offender in submitting to it, he was now anxious not only for his restoration, but for his comfort. He sets a most amiable example of the manner in which the contrite spirit should be cheered, and the broken heart bound up. No one was ever more

studious than Saint Paul to awaken contrition, none more eager to heal its pangs.

Want of consideration is an error into which even good men sometimes fall. They do not always enter intimately into the character and circumstances of the persons they address. Saint Paul writes to his friends like one that felt, because he partook, the same fallen humanity with them; like one who was familiar with the infirmities of our common nature, who could allow for doubt and distrust, for misapprehension and error; who expected inconsistency, and was not deterred by perverseness; who bore with failure where it was not wilful, and who could reprove obduracy without being disappointed at meeting with it. In Saint Paul, the heart of flesh was indeed substituted for the heart of stone.

Our spiritual strength is invigorated by the retrospection of our former faults. Saint Paul's tenderness for his converts was doubtless increased by the remembrance of his own errors; a remembrance which left a compassionate feeling on his impressible heart. It never, however, led him to be guilty of that mischievous compassion, of preferring the ease of his friends to their safety. He never soothed where it was his duty to reprove. He knew that integrity was the true tenderness; that a harsh truth, which might tend to save the soul, had more

humanity than a palliative, which might endanger it.

From his intimate knowledge of the infirmities even of good men, he had such a conviction of the possibility of relaxing in religious strictness, that he scrupled not to express his fears to his Corinthian friends, that when he came among them, "he should not find them such as he would:" in order to soften, he divides the blame, by fearing, that "he should be found of them such as they would not." Knowing, too, that the temper was more under control, and irritation less easily excited, by epistolary than by verbal communication; when he expresses his fears that at their meeting he might find among them "debates, envyings, wrath, swellings," he tenderly apologizes for expressing his apprehensions, *lest in conversation he might use sharpness.*

In his most severe animadversions he does not speak of any with hopeless harshness. He seldom treats the bad as irreclaimable, but generally contrives to leave them some remains of credit. He seems to feel that by stripping erring men of every vestige of character, he should strip them also of every glimmering of hope, of every incitement to reformation. It is indeed almost cutting off any chance of a return to virtue, when we do not leave the offender some remnant of reputation to which he may still be led to act up. May not this preservation

from despair lead to the operation of a higher principal? Though Timothy is exhorted to have no company with him who obeys not the word of Paul's Epistle, the prohibition is only in order "that he may be ashamed;"—"yet is he not to be accounted as an enemy, but exhorted as a brother."

As there seems to have been no church which had fallen into such important errors as that of Corinth, and consequently none where more pointed reproof was necessary, so in no Epistle is there more preparatory soothing, more conciliatory preliminaries, to the counsels or the censures he is about to communicate. He tells them that "in every thing they are enriched," — "that they come behind in no gift," — before he reprehends them for their contentious spirit, for their divisions, for their strifes. Thus, though the reproof would be keenly felt, it would not be met with a spirit previously exasperated; — a spirit which those reprovers infallibly excite, who by indiscriminate upbraiding stir up the irascible passions at the outset, shut up every avenue to the kind affections, and thus deprive the offender of that patient calmness with which he might otherwise have profited by the reproof.

This intimate feeling of his own imperfection is every where visible. It makes him more than once press on his friends the Christian duty of bearing one another's burdens, intimating how

necessary this common principle of mutual kindness was, as they themselves had so much to call forth the forbearance of others. In his usual strain of referring to first motives, he does not forget to remind them that it was fulfilling the law of Christ.

As the ardent zeal of Saint Paul led him into no enthusiasm, so the warmth of his affections never blinded his judgment. Religion did not dry up, as it is sometimes accused of doing, the spring of his natural feelings; his sensibility was exquisite; but the heart which felt all, was quickened by an activity which did all, and regulated by a faith which conquered all.

His sorrows and his joys, both of which were intense, never seem to have arisen from any thing which related merely to himself. His own happiness or distress was little influenced by personal considerations; the varying condition, the alternate improvement or declension of his converts alone, could sensibly raise or depress his feelings. With what anguish of spirit does he mourn over some, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Mark again his self-renouncing joy — "We are glad when we are weak and ye are strong." Again, "Let me rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

When he expresses such a feeling sense of

distress, upon the interesting occasion of taking his departure for Jerusalem, "the Holy Ghost witnessing in every city that bonds and imprisonment awaited him*," still he felt no concern for his own safety. No: he anticipated without terror his probable reception there. With a noble disregard of all personal considerations, he exclaims, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."†

If none of these things moved him, then whence arose the sorrow he so keenly felt? It arose from no selfish cause; it sprung from a consideration far superior to that tender feeling, that they should meet no more, though that too he would deeply regret; it was occasioned by reflection on the future condition of the church, and a prophetic view of that corruption of doctrine to which he foresaw his beloved converts would be soon exposed.

There is something singularly beautiful in the dignity, simplicity, and godly sincerity of this apostolic charge, to which we allude. With humble confidence, he refers his audience to their own knowledge of his whole conduct. He assures them, that neither any fears of the

* Acts, xx.

† We make no apology for the repeated references to this portion of this most interesting chapter.

insidious Jews, always on the watch to circumvent him, nor the hostility of the idolatrous Gentiles, always ready to oppose him, had ever driven him to withhold any important truth, any salutary admonition. He slightly touches on the two fundamental truths, on which all his instructions had been built, *faith and repentance:* then he reminds them, that not satisfied with the public exercise of his function, he had practised that subsidiary and valuable method of instruction — private visits at the houses of individuals — a method equally practicable in all ages of the church; equally desirable to all who wish to gain a real acquaintance, in the intervals of public service, with the necessities, the infirmities, and the sins of their respective hearers. This would enable him to perform his stated ministrations with tenfold effect. It would initiate him into the endless variety of characters of which every audience is composed; it would enable the teacher to be more personal in his exhortations, more pointed in his reproofs, more specific in his instruction, than he could be when he addressed them in the great assembly. It would also qualify him for more extensive usefulness in those public addresses, by the materials which he was thus collecting. It would be among the means also to win their affection and increase their attachment, when they saw that his zeal for their spiritual advancement was large and cordial; that he did not

content himself with the stipulated scantling of bare-weight duty; that he did not deal out his instruction with a legal scrupulosity, but was willing to spend, and desirous to be spent, for them.

With what a holy satisfaction did the conscience of the Apostle further testify that no desire of pleasing, no fear of offending, had prevented him from delivering wholesome truths, because they might be unpalatable! What an awful intimation to every ambassador of Christ, that this indefatigable Apostle, at the moment of final separation, could call on all present to testify, that whatever might have been the negligence of the hearer, the preacher "was pure from the blood of all men;" that he had never been guilty of that false tenderness, of not declaring to them the whole counsel of God! He appeals to his disinterestedness, that, so far from being influenced by any lucrative motive, he had laboured with his own hands, not only to support himself, but to assist the poor. How touching, no doubt, to his hearers, was the intimation, that the same hands which had been raised for them in prayer, had been employed for their support!

This modest allusion to his own liberality, and to the personal labour which had enabled him to exercise it, was a proper parting lesson. It reminded his auditors that no part of his religion was merely theoretical. He had, doubt-

lesss, frequently insisted on the principle; he here shows them its practical effect; — in this, as in other instances, pressing home every truth he taught by every virtue he exercised.

He concludes with a powerful application to his associates in the ministry, to whom he was about to commit the care of the people. The tender grief, the grateful sympathy, the prayers, the tears and embraces of the afflicted audience, "sorrowing most because they should see his face no more," bore a truer testimony to the fidelity of the preacher, than the most elaborate eulogy on his style or manner; and doubtless afforded a higher test of excellence, than a mere temporary effect, produced by any artificial harangue, which, while it fills the hearer with admiration of the preacher, leaves his own conscience untouched, his own heart unhumbled.

He then bequeaths, as a kind of dying legacy, the people to their ministers; affectionately exhorting the latter, first, to "take heed to themselves," as the only sure earnest of their taking heed to their flock, strengthening his exhortation "to feed the church of God" by a motive at once the most powerful and the most endearing, — because *he hath purchased it with his own blood.*

In that great and terrible day of the Lord, when the glorious Head of the Church shall summon the assembled universe to judgment, — among the myriads who shall tremblingly await

their own definitive sentence, how will the exploring eye of men and angels be turned on the more prominent and public characters, who, from rank, profession, talent, or influence, were invested with superior responsibility! What individual among these distinguished classes will be able to endure the additional load of other men's sins, brought forward to swell his personal account?

Though it is not easy to image to the mind a more touching event than this parting scene of Christian friends on the shores of Ephesus, yet there is one to come of far higher interest, that of their re-union; — that august scene, when the pastor and his flock shall appear together, at the call of the Chief Shepherd; — when the servants of the Universal Master, — "they who have sought that which was lost, and brought again that which was driven away, and bound up that which was broken, and strengthened that which was sick*,"—shall deliver up to Him who laid down his life for the sheep, that flock "which he will require at their hands."

Yes! among the candidates for a blessed immortality will stand, awfully pre-eminent, the band of Christian ministers, each surrounded by "the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer," every one of whom had sacramentally declared, at his introduction into the fold, that he undertook the sacred office in

* Ezekiel, xxxiv. 16.

obedience to that solemn call.* What a sound, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" to him who shall have acquitted himself of his tremendous responsibility! What a spectacle! — multitudes entering into the joy of their Lord, gratefully ascribing, under God, their opening and inconceivable felicity to the zeal, the fidelity, the prayers of their pastor! For them, — to resume the beautiful metaphors of the Holy Book, —for them, *the green pastures*, into which they had conducted their flock, shall flourish in everlasting verdure; for them, *the waters of comfort, beside which they had led them*, shall flow from a source which eternity cannot exhaust, from those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore.

If this spectacle *has* a contrast, we avert our eyes from the contemplation. If even the picture is too terrible to be sketched, who could stand the possibility of its being realised?

This whole valedictory address to the elders of Ephesus combines every beauty of composition: it exhibits an energy, a devotion, a resignation, an integrity, a tenderness, which cannot be sufficiently admired. And the more intimately to touch their hearts by mixing the remembrance of the friend with the injunctions he had delivered, he not only refers them to the doctrines which he had taught, but to the tears which he had shed.

* See the Ordination Service.

There is nothing like stoical indifference, nothing like a contempt of the sensibilities of nature, in his whole conduct; and it furnishes a proof how happily magnanimity and tenderness blend together, that as there is probably no character in history which exhibits a more undaunted heroism than that of St. Paul, so there is perhaps not one whose tears are so frequently recorded. "What mean ye to weep and break my heart?" is an interrogatory as intelligible to us in the character of Paul, as the heroic declaration, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." What ground, then, is there for that charge so frequently brought against persons of eminent piety, that they are destitute of natural feeling? The Old Testament saints were striking examples of domestic tenderness. No history in the world exhibits such touching instances of paternal affection.

When Saint Paul exhorts his converts "to stand fast in the Lord," he declares his own participation in the blessings of this steadfastness in terms the most endearing: — "Dearly beloved and longed for, my crown and joy, so stand fast in the Lord my dearly beloved;" — as if he would add to the motives of their perseverance, the transport it would afford to himself. His very existence seems to depend on their steadfastness in piety; — "for now we *live* if ye stand fast in the Lord." Again, as a proof

how dear his converts were to him, he was desirous of imparting to them *not only the Gospel of God, but also his own soul.*

The spirit of Christianity is no where more apparent than in the affectionate strain in which he adjures his Roman friends only to consent to save their own souls. One would suppose it was not the immortal happiness of others, but his own, which so earnestly engaged him. How fervently tender is his mode of obtesting them! "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God." — "I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." * As the representative of his Master he implores of man the reconciliation for which it would be natural to expect that man himself, whose own concern it is, should be the solicitor.

Saint Paul's zeal for the spiritual welfare of whole communities did not swallow up his ardent attachment to individuals; nor did his regard to their higher interests lead him to overlook their personal sufferings. He condescends to give particular advice to one friend† respecting the management of his health. In his grief for the sickness of another ‡, and his joy at his recovery, he does not pretend to a feeling purely disinterested, but gratefully acknowledges that his joy was partly for his own sake, "lest he should have sorrow upon sorrow." These soft touches of sympathy for

* 2 Cor. x. † Timothy. ‡ Epaphroditus.

individuals particularly dear to him, in a man so like-minded with Christ, in the instances of Lazarus and John, are a sufficient refutation of the whimsical assertion of a lively genius, that particular friendships are hostile to the spirit of Christianity.*

The capacious heart of this blessed Apostle was so large as to receive into it all who loved his Lord. The salutations with which most of his Epistles close, and the affectionate remembrances which they convey, include, perhaps, the

* It is, however, a debt of justice due to a departed friend to observe, that no suspicion could be more unfounded than that Mr. Soame Jenyns was not sincere in his profession of Christianity. The author lived much in his very pleasant society, and is persuaded that he died a sincere Christian. He had a peculiar turn of humour; he delighted in novelty and paradox, and perhaps brought too much of both into his religion. Ingenious men will sometimes be ingenious in the wrong place. If he lays too much stress on some things, and underrates others; if he mistakes or overlooks even fundamental points, so that some of his opinions must appear defective to the experienced Christian; yet the general turn of his work on the *Internal Evidence of Christianity* may render it useful to others, by inviting them by the very novelty of his manner, to consult a species of evidence to which they have not been accustomed. A sceptical friend of the writer of these pages, who had stood out against the arguments of some of the ablest divines, was led by this little work to examine more deeply into Internal Evidence; it sent him to read his Bible in a new spirit. He followed up his enquiries, consulted authors whose views were more matured, and died a sound believer.

names of a greater number of friends than any dozen of Greek or Roman heroes, in the plenitude of success and power, ever attracted; if we may judge in the one case by the same rule as in the other, the narratives of history, or the writings of biographical memoirs.

But his benevolence was not confined to the narrow bounds of friends or country. *He was a man*, and nothing that involved the best interests of man was indifferent to him. A most beautiful comparison has been drawn by as fine a genius as has adorned this or any age, between the learned and not illaudable curiosity which has led so many ingenious travellers to visit distant and dangerous climes, in order "to contemplate mutilated statues and defaced coins, to collate manuscripts, and take the height of pyramids," with the zeal which carried the late martyr of humanity on a more noble pilgrimage, "to search out infected hospitals, to explore the depth of dungeons, and to take the gauge of human misery," in order to relieve it.*

Without the unworthy desire to rob this eminent philanthropist of his well-earned palm, may we not be allowed to wish, that the exquisite eulogist of Howard had also instituted a comparison, which would have opened so vast a field to his eloquent pen, between the adventurous expeditions of the conqueror, the circumnavigator, the discoverer, the naturalist — with

* Mr. Burke.

those of Paul, the martyr of the Gospel? Paul, who, renouncing ease and security, sacrificing fame and glory, encountered "weariness and painfulness, watching, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; was beaten with rods, frequent in prisons, in deaths oft, was once stoned, thrice suffered shipwreck, was a day and a night in the deep*," went from shore to shore, and from city to city, knowing that bonds and imprisonment awaited him; and for what purpose? He, too, was a discoverer, and in one sense a naturalist. He explored not indeed the treasures of the mineral, nor the varieties of the vegetable, world. His business was with man; his object, the discovery of man's moral wants; his study, to apply a proportionate remedy; his work, to break up the barren ground of the human soil; his aim, to promote the culture of the undisciplined heart; his end, the salvation of those for whom Christ died. He did not bring away one poor native to graft the vices of a polished country on the savage ignorance of his own; but he carried to the natives themselves the news, and the means of eternal life.

He was also a conqueror; but he visited new regions, not to depopulate, but to enlighten them. He sought triumphs, but they were over sin and ignorance. He achieved conquests, but it was over the prince of darkness. He gained trophies, but they were not military banners,

* 2 Cor. xi.

but rescued souls. He erected monuments, but they were to the glory of God. He did not carve his own name on the rocky shore, but he engraved that of his Lord on the hearts of the people. While conflicting with want, and struggling with misery, he planted churches; while sinking under reproach and obloquy, he erected the standard of the Cross among barbarians, and, far more hopeless enterprise! among philosophers; and having escaped with life from the most uncivilised nations, was reserved for martyrdom in the Imperial queen of cities!

CHAP. XII.

SAINT PAUL'S HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

TRUE religion consists in the subjugation of the body to the soul, and of the soul to God. The Apostle every where shows, that by our apostasy this order is destroyed, or rather inverted. At the same time he teaches, that though brought into this degraded state by our own perverseness, we are not hopelessly abandoned to it. He not only shows the possibility, but the mode of our restoration, and describes the happy condition of the restored, even in this world, by declaring, that *to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.*

He knew that our faculties are neither good nor evil in themselves, but powerful instruments for the promotion of both; active capacities for either, just as the bent of our character is determined by the predominance of religion or of sin, of the sensual or of the spiritual mind. Saint Paul eminently exhibited, both in his example and in his writings, this spiritual mind. He was not only supremely excellent in unfolding the doctrines, and inculcating the duties, of Christianity; he was not only equal in correctness of sentiment, and purity of practice, with

those who are drily orthodox, and superior to those who are coldly practical; but "he perfects holiness in the fear of God." He abounds in that heavenly-mindedness which is the uniting link between doctrinal and practical piety; which, by the unction it infuses into both, proves that both are the result of Divine grace; and which consists in an entire consecration of the affections, a voluntary surrender of the whole man to God.

This disposition the Apostle makes the preliminary to all performance, as well as the condition of all acceptance. This it is which constitutes the charm of his writings. There is a spirit of sanctity which pervades them, and which, whilst it affords the best evidence of the love of God shed abroad in his own heart, infuses it also into the heart of his readers. While he is musing the fire burns, and communicates its pure flame to every breast susceptible of genuine Christian feeling. Under its influence his arguments become persuasions, his exhortations entreaties. A sentiment so tender, an earnestness so imploring, breathes throughout them, that it might seem that all regard for himself, all care for his own interests, is swallowed up in his ardent and affectionate concern for the spiritual interests of others.

The exuberance of his love and gratitude, the fruits of his abundant faith, breaks out almost in spite of himself. His zeal reproves

our timidity, his energy our indifference. "He dwells," as an eloquent writer has remarked, "with almost untimely descant," on the name of Him who had called him out of darkness into his marvellous light; that name which we are so reluctant to pronounce, not through reverence to its possessor, but fear of each other, ever sounds with holy boldness from the lips of Paul. His bursts of sacred joy, his triumphant appeals to the truth of the promises, his unbounded confidence in the hope set before him, carry an air not only of patience but of victory, not only of faith but of fruition.

Whoever desires more particularly to compare this spirit of Divine power manifested by the Apostle, with the opposite spirit of the world, let him carefully peruse the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. After describing the strong and painful conflict with the malignant power of sin in the seventh chapter, with what a holy exultation does he, in the opening of the eighth, hurry in, as it were, the assurance that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It somewhat resembles that instant, I had almost said that impatient, mercy of God in the third of Genesis, which seems eager to make the promise follow close upon the fall, the forgiveness upon the sin; to cut off the distressing space between terror and joy, to leave no interval for despair. God, who is so patient when

he is to punish, is not patient when he is to save. He delays to strike, but he makes haste to pardon. "After the first offence," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "God could not stay from redeeming;" nor could Paul stay from proclaiming that we *are* redeemed. The Apostle, like his Creator, loses not a moment to comfort the soul which he has been afflicting.

In this divine effusion we at once discern the difference between natural weakness and superadded strength; between the infirmities which are fortified by the assistance of the Spirit, and the sensual mind, which not only is not but cannot be subject to the law of God; between him who not having "the Spirit of Christ is none of his," and him in whom "Christ the spirit of life dwells;" between him who, if he yield to the pleasures of sense, shall die, and him who, through the Spirit mortifying the deeds of the body, shall live.

It is worth observing that he does not make the line of demarcation between the two classes of characters to consist merely in the actual crimes and grosser vices of the one class, and the better actions of the other. It is to the sensual and the spiritual *mind*, the fountain of good and evil deeds, to which he refers as the decisive test. This radical distinction he further conceives to be a more obvious line of separation than even any difference of religious opi-

nions, any distinction arising from the mere adoption of peculiar dogmas.

That the reviving assurance may appear to belong exclusively to real Christians, he marks the change of character by the definite tense *now*, implying their recent victory over their old corruptions which he had been deploring. This precaution would prevent those who remained in their former state from taking to themselves the comfort of a promise in which they have no part. He guards it still more explicitly by declaring, that the true evidence of this renovation of heart was their *walking* after the Spirit, — a term which describes habitual progress in the new way to which we are conducted by the new nature, and which, if it do not always preserve us from deviating from it, recalls us back to it.

This power Saint Paul felt; and on this principle he wrote; and he never wrote on any principle on which he did not act. After he had carried piety to the most heroic elevation; after he had pressed the most fervent exertions on others, and gained the most splendid conquests over himself, — still he considered himself only in the *road* to salvation; still he never thought of slackening his course; he thought not of resting, he had not reached his end. He was not intimidated from pursuing it by new difficulties; his resolution rose with his trials; as one assault was but the prelude to another, so a

new conflict still brought a new victory. All he feared for himself, all against which he cautioned others, was declension; his grand solicitude for them and for himself was, that they might not lose the ground they had gained. He well knew that even the present position could not be long maintained without the pursuit of farther conquests. He *walked* after the Spirit.

The terrible forms of distress which he summons to view in this, as well as in other parts of his Epistles, always remind him of the principle which makes them supportable. He enumerates human miseries in all their variety of shapes, — *tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword.* But to what end does he muster this confederated band of woes? He calls on them, not to avert the sufferings which they inflict; no, he challenges them to separate the Christian sufferer *from the love of Christ.* He presents himself to us as an instance of the supreme triumph of this love over all earthly calamity. The man whose *distresses abounded,* who was *pressed above measure,* comes out of the conflict, not only a conqueror, — that, to one of his ardent spirit, seemed too poor a triumph,— *he is more than a conqueror.* But how is this victory achieved? *Through him who loved us.* That lowliness which made him say just before, "that which I do I allow not, but what I hate that I do," must have been lifted by a mighty faith when he exclaimed, "I am persuaded that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In speaking, in this chapter, of the glories of the eternal world, his rapture does not escape him as the sally of the imagination, as a thought awakened by a sudden glance of the object; he does not express himself at random from the impulse of the moment; his is not the conjectural language of ignorant desire, of uncertain hope; it is an assumption of the sober tone of calculation. "*I reckon*," says he, like a man skilled in this spiritual arithmetic, — "I reckon," after a due estimate of their comparative value, "that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

No man was ever so well qualified to make this estimate. Of the sufferings of the present world he had shared more largely than any man. Of the glory that shall be revealed, he had had a glimpse granted to no other man. He had been caught up into paradise. He "had heard the words of God, and seen the visions of the Almighty," and the result of his privileged experience was, that he "desired to depart and to be with Christ;" that he desired to escape from this valley of tears; that he was impatient to re-

cover the celestial vision, eager to perpetuate the momentary foretaste of the glories of immortality.

We perceive, then, how this hope of future felicity sustained him under conflicts, of which we, in an established state of Christianity, and suffering only under the common trials of mortality, can have no adequate conception. His courageous faith was kept alive and fortified by fervently practising the duty he so unweariedly urges upon others, *continuing instant in prayer.*

To encourage this practice in his readers, and at the same time to point out the source of his own heavenly hope, and continual intercourse with the Divine Presence, he adds, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." Nor does his high trust and confidence in God, thus gendered, easily find its limit. On the contrary, he adds, "we know that *all* things work together for good to them that love God."

This trust was an assurance of the largest import, and it involved indefinite consequences. Having cordially confided in Him for salvation through the blood of Christ, he found, as is always the case, the greater involving the less; he found that he had little difficulty in trusting Him with his inferior concerns. To Him to whom he had committed his eternal happiness,

to Him he could not scruple to confide his fortune, his health, his reputation, his life.

We have not, it is true, these manifestations, of which the Apostle was favoured with a temporary enjoyment. But we have *his* testimony, added to the testimony, the evidences, the proofs, the promises, the demonstrations of the whole New Testament. Why, then, are we not supported, encouraged, animated by them? It is because we do not examine these evidences, because we do not consult these testimonies, because we neglect these proofs; therefore it is, that we are not nurtured by these promises. We entertain them as speculations, rather than as convictions, we receive them as notions rather than as facts.

If ever a cordial desire of these devout assurances is conferred, it is in fervent prayer. What an encouragement to this holy exercise is the hope of being raised by it to the heart-felt belief that such felicity is real, and that it is reserved for the final portion of the humble Christian! Too humble, perhaps, to give full credit that such great things can be in store for him. For a moment he is staggered, till faith, the parent of that humility which trembles while it believes, enables him to apply to himself the promises of Him to whom nothing is impossible, the merits of Him for whom nothing is too great, the death of Him who died that we might live for ever.

In whatever part of his writings the Apostle speaks of the efficacy of the death of Christ, and of the "constraining" power of his love, there is a vehemence in his desire, a vivacity in his sentiments, an energy in his language, an intensity in his feelings, which strongly indicate a mind penetrated with the depth of his own views. He paints the love of his Lord as a grace, of which, though his soul was deeply sensible as to its nature, yet as to the degree, it is "exceeding abundantly above," not only "all that he could ask," but "all that he could think." His boldest conceptions sink under the impression which no language could convey.

Yet these sublime portions of his writings, which bear the more special stamp and impress of the Gospel, which afford the nearest view of realities as yet unapproachable, are set aside by many, as things in which they have no personal concern. They have, indeed, a sort of blind reverence for them as for something which they conceive to be at once sacred and unintelligible, such a kind of respect as a man would naturally entertain at the sight of a copy of the Scriptures in a language which he did not understand.

Eloquent as he was, we often find him labouring under his intense conception of ideas too vast for utterance. In describing the extent of the love of God, its height and depth, its length and breadth, his soul seems to expand with the dimensions he is unfolding. His ex-

pressions seem to acquire all that force with which he intimates that the soul itself, so acted upon, is invested. *To be strengthened with might*, would have been reckoned tautology in an ordinary writer on an ordinary subject; and to be strengthened with *all* might, would seem an attribute impossible to mortality. But holy Paul had himself felt the excellency of that power; he knew that it is derived, and that the fountain of derivation is *the glorious power of God.*

In delineating the mighty operations of Divine love on the human mind, the seeming hyperboles are soberly true. Where the theme is illimitable, language will burst its bounds. He preaches *riches which are unsearchable* — exhorts to know *the love which surpasses knowledge* — promises *peace which passes understanding* — we must *look at the things which are not seen* — *against hope we must believe in hope* — while *sorrowful we must be always rejoicing — as having nothing we must reckon that we possess all things — dying and behold we live — though unknown we are well known.* In short, he reconciles apparent contradictions, unites seeming opposites. Antipathies by nature become affinities by grace. The love of God in Christ is the point where he makes contraries centre, and impossibilities meet.

His spirit seems most intimately to identify itself with the church of Ephesus. What an

improbable union! The late idolatrous worshippers of Diana, and the late persecutor of the saints of Jesus, have now but one heart and one soul! These recent enemies to Christ, and to each other, now meet in one common point of attraction. With what holy triumph does he dilate on their mutual faith! that love of God in Christ Jesus which is their common centre, their indissoluble bond of union!

Still, as we have such frequent occasion to observe, he does not sacrifice practical duty to the indulgence of his rapture. Still he does not allow even these Ephesians to rest satisfied with the grace they have received. It is not enough that they have been favoured with a vocation, they must "walk worthy of it." "The perfecting of the saints" must be carried on; "they must reach to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." No such perfection had been attained as would allow them to rest in their present position. Even on this highly-favoured church, *progress* is enjoined, pressed, reiterated. No elevation of devout feeling sets him above attention to moral goodness.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the abrupt apostrophes of praise and gratitude into which, in the midst of sorrow, of exhortation, of reproof, he unexpectedly breaks out. The love of his Redeemer so fills his soul, that it requires an effort to restrain its outward expression. Even when engaged in the transac-

tion of business, and directing the concerns of others, which, by an ordinary mind, would have been pleaded as a valid reason for suspending spiritual ideas, and dismissing spiritual feelings, they yet mix themselves, as it were involuntarily, with his secular cares; there is not only a satisfaction, but a joyfulness, in these escapes of affection which seem to spring from his soul, in proportion to the depression of his circumstances, to the danger which surrounded, to the deaths which threatened him.

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, it is recorded that they prayed at midnight. This would naturally be expected from such men, under such circumstances; but it is added, "they sang *praises* unto God." Thus they not only justified but glorified Him, under this suffering, as well as degradation. For it must not be forgotten, that this imprisonment was not merely a measure for securing their persons, — they were stripped bare, — many stripes were laid upon them, and the iron entered into their soul. Yet they sang praises unto God!

What a triumph is here of the element of spirit over the force and violence of outward circumstances!

> "Th' oppressor holds
> His body bound, but knows not what a range
> His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
> And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
> Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells."

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, to which we have just referred, we are presented with a fresh instance how much his devotion rose under the same circumstances of distress. It was written from a prison, and is almost one entire effusion of love and praise. It is an overflowing expression of affectionate gratitude, that has no parallel. It seems to be enriched with an additional infusion of the spirit of God, and has perhaps more of the heroism of Christian feeling than, except in the discourses of our Lord, is to be found in the whole sacred treasury. It seems to come fresh from the celestial world. He speaks not as from a prison, but as from a region of light, and life, and glory. His thoughts are in heaven, his soul is with his Saviour, his heart is with his treasure: no wonder, then, that his language has a tincture of the idiom of immortality.

As Archimedes, when Syracuse was taken by the besiegers, was so intent on a mathematical demonstration, that he knew not when the city was lost; so the Apostle, absorbed in a concern as much superior to that of the philosopher as Scripture truth is to scientific, lost sight of the cruelties of Nero, forgot his former sufferings, felt not his present captivity, thought not of his impending fate: — present, past, and future, as they related to himself, were absorbed in his zeal for the salvation of the Church, for the glory of its Founder! Mark the Divine sup-

ports vouchsafed to this imprisoned Saint! Note his state of grace! Observe the perfection of his faith! How the motion of his spirit was accelerated as it drew nearer to its centre! He, whose deep humility had suggested to him the possibility, that, after converting others, he might himself be rejected: he who had desired not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon — now declares that he is *ready* to be offered up, now *desires* to depart; not in the gentle decay of exhausted nature, not in the weaning languor of a sick bed, not in the calm of a peaceful dissolution, suffering only the pains inseparable from an ordinary death; but he is prepared to meet the hand of violence: he is ready to pour out his blood upon the scaffold; he is longing to join "the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." So far from being dismayed, because he knew that his martyrdom was at hand; he who knew not what it was to boast, yet, knowing in whom he had trusted; feeling his eternal redemption drawing nigh, could exclaim with a holy bravery: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

Then, in a rapture of triumphant joy at the mental view of the crown of righteousnes, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, "had prepared for him against the great day," that same unparalleled philanthropy, which he had so con-

stantly manifested, breaks out and consecrates a moment, when we might have supposed the immediate nearness of his own unspeakable blessedness would have engrossed his whole soul. His religion was no selfish piety, his hope no solitary salvation. Gratitude swells into its highest transport from the reflection that the Lord Jesus had not exclusively reserved the Crown for him, no, nor for the beloved Timothy, to whom he writes, nor for the multitude of his own friends, nor for the converts who were to be peculiarly "his joy and crown of rejoicing;" but "for ALL them also which love his appearing," for all "the redeemed of the Lord" to the end of the world.

CHAP. XIII.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE QUALITIES OF SAINT PAUL: HIS KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE — HIS DELICACY IN GIVING ADVICE OR REPROOF — HIS INTEGRITY.

THERE is in Saint Paul's writings and conduct such a warmth and openness; so much frankness and candour; such an unreserved pouring out of his very soul; such a free disclosure of his feelings, as well as of his opinions; such an elevation, mingled with such a soberness of thinking; so much social kindness, with so much divine love; so much practical activity, with such deep spirituality; so much human prudence, with so much of the wisdom which is from above; so much tenderness for the persons of men, with so little connivance at their faults; so much professional dignity, with so much personal humility, — as it would be difficult to find in any other human being.

Yet in all these opposite excellences there is nothing that is not practicable, nothing that is not imitable. His religion, like his morality, has a peculiar sedateness. His ardent feelings betray him into no intemperance of speech, into no inequality of action. His piety is free from eccentricity, his faith from presumption.

Uniformly we find a great reasonablenes in his character; and it adds to his value as an example, that he was, if we may be allowed so familiar an expression, eminently a man of business. His transactions, indeed, always tended to the same end with his devotions and his instructions; he was full of care, but it was the care of all the churches: each day was fully occupied, but it was that same "care" which came upon him, not only as a Sunday, but as a daily care.

The perfection in which he possessed this quality proves that his devotedness had in it nothing of abstraction. He exhibited no contempt of the common usages, no renunciation of the common comforts of life, when the former could with propriety be observed, or the latter be lawfully enjoyed; no coveting of sufferings, when they could be conscientiously avoided. He was no pattern for ascetics, no prototype for Stylites. He bequeathed no example of bodily macerations, nor uncommanded austerities, nor penances unprofitably aiming at atonement. His idea of self-denial was to sacrifice his own will; his notion of pleasing God was to do and suffer the Divine will.

His discretion was scarcely less conspicuous than his zeal: unlike some enthusiastic Christians in the early ages of the Church, who, not contented to meet persecution, invited it; he never sought, whilst he never shrunk from,

danger. Though his life was one continued martyrdom, to which the brief suffering of the stake or the axe would have been a mercy, yet he was contented to live for lengthened services; though he would have finished his course with joy to him self, he was willing to protract it for the glory of God; though *he counted not his life dear*, yet he knew it to be useful, and therefore desired its continuance.

He was entirely exempt from that indiscreet zeal which seems to glory in provoking the displeasure of the world. He had nothing of that bad judgment, which seeks distinction from singularity. His straight-forward rectitude neither courted the applause nor despised the good opinion of men. He who, in the integrity of his heart, could say, "We sought glory neither of you nor yet of others," in the tenderness of that heart could say, to the same persons, for "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing; are not even ye, — ye are our glory and joy?"

He was totally free from any irrational confidence in supernatural interpositions. Though living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he felt no enthusiastic inflation. Though, in his perilous * voyage, assured by an angel of God that there should be no loss of lives, yet he helped *with his own hands* to throw out the

* Acts, xxvii.

tackling, and the ship *must* be worked by his direction. He went farther, declaring, "except the men abide in the ship, ye *cannot* be saved." Could the boldest impugner of Divine Providence have exercised more prudence, have exhibited more activity?

Not only from this passage, but from the general spirit of his writings, we may learn, that merely to say we trust in God for the accomplishment of any thing within our own power, without using ourselves the rational means of accomplishing it, is a total want of sense; and not entirely to trust in Him, while we are using them, is an utter want of faith.

Though favoured with immediate revelations from above, yet was Saint Paul so singularly modest, as only slightly to advert to Divine communications, and then in the name of a third person, — *I knew a man in Christ.* So continent of speech, as not even to disclose this distinction till near fourteen years after it had been conferred. May we not then agree with the sagacious Paley, that "Saint Paul's mind had none of the characters of enthusiasm; that the coolness of his head always kept pace with the warmth of his heart."

His conduct uniformly exhibits the precise distinction between Christian wisdom and worldly policy. His boundary line is clearly defined, and he never steps over it to serve a purpose. Of that prudence which is akin to

selfishness, of that discretion which leans to craft, of that candour which tends to undue pliancy, of that wisdom which is sensual and earthly, he had not the slightest tincture. What an illustrious orator of our own time said of his contemporary statesman, may be far more appropriately applied to Saint Paul, — that, in gaining admiration, *his virtues were his arts.* *

His intellectual powers were admirably constituted to second his high moral and spiritual attainments. He had an intuitive sagacity of mind. This deep master of the science of man was intimately acquainted with all the doublings and turnings, the intricacies and perversenesses of the heart. In short, he knew the exact point from which to take the most comprehensive view of this *scene of man;* and his writings possess this great advantage, that they also put the intelligent reader in the position to take the same view. He knew every plait and fold of the human character. He had studied the species in all its modifications and varieties, from the monarch on the throne to the meanest officer in his court; from the high priest presiding in the Sanhedrim to the pharisee praying in the street: of the intolerance of the one, he had had personal experience; through the duplicity of the

* Mr. Burke of the Marquis of Rockingham.

other, his keen eye could pierce, without consulting the breadth of his phylactery.

The same acute penetration brought him no less acquainted with the errors of the well-intentioned, with the weaknesses of the wise, with the failings of the virtuous, and the inconsistencies of even the conscientious. Yet did he never convert his knowledge of all the shades of the human mind to an unkind, malevolent, or selfish purpose. It never taught him to hate the unworthy, with whose obliquities it made him acquainted; or to despise the weak, whose infirmities it had discovered. So far was he from availing himself of his sagacity by turning the vices or imbecilities of others to his own account, that it inspired him with a more tender and compassionate feeling for the frailties of their common nature.

In perusing his Epistles we should always bear in mind that Saint Paul is not addressing the profligate and profane, but converts, or, at least, religious professors. This consideration would prevent our putting the reproofs and corrections which he thought necessary for them at too great a distance from ourselves. Into this danger we may be too much inclined to fall, if we do not bring these people nearer to what we suppose to be our own level. They were already Christians. It was not, therefore, always necessary to arrange all the fundamental doctrines into a regular system, much less to

begin with a formal exposition of the elements of a religion, with the principles of which they were already imbued; or at least with the doctrines of which they were acquainted. This manner of addressing them is a proof that their progress was already considerable.

The first Epistle is inscribed "To all that are at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, whose faith is spoken of throughout the world." The next is "To the church of God at Corinth, with all the saints in Achaia." Another "To the saints that are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Again, "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse." His letters to individual friends designate also the piety of his correspondents. "To Timothy his son in the faith;" "To Titus his own son after the common faith." And in writing to the Hebrews collectively, he denominates them "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

It would be well if the generality of Christians could aspire to rank with any of these classes. Saint Paul's knowledge of mankind, however, of which we have said so much, would prevent his addressing the best of his converts, as characters who did not require either caution, correction, or improvement. He knew, even after they had adopted the Christian profession, how pertinaciously bad habits would cleave to some, how much besetting sins, natural infir-

mity, temptation without and passion within, would impede the progress of others. He was aware that many who thought themselves sincere, and perhaps really were so, were yet careless and cold-hearted; that many who were warm in profession were selfish, indolent, covetous; that many who appeared to be lovers of God were yet inordinately lovers of pleasure; that some who professed to be dead to sin were alive to the world. "Alexander did him much evil;" "Demas forsook him;" "Phygellus and Hermogenes turned away from him."

The persons to whom he wrote might, on the whole, be considered as no unfair specimen of professing Christians in every age. Consequently neither his doctrine nor his precepts can, by any fair rule of judgment, be limited to the community, or even to the individual, to whom they were immediately inscribed; he has erected his mandates into an unalterable standard of general Christianity.

The inspiring guide of Saint Paul knew that human nature, left to its own specific operation, would be the same in that church of Rome to which his Epistle was addressed, as in the now-existing church of that metropolis, — a church which has so far departed from the simplicity of its founder; — that the church of Ephesus would differ only in its local circumstances and form of government from the church of England; that the same sort of beings, with the

same wants and weaknesses, which composed the church of Galatia, would compose that of Geneva and of Holland; — that it was not the Corinthian convert alone who should become "a new creature;" that it was not the member of any *particular* community that must "put off the old man with his deeds;" he knew that the transmuting power of true religion would confer the same character of newness upon every genuine believer; that as in every age the principle is the same, so also will be its results.

In illustration of these general remarks, let us select a particular case. — Our Apostle had not studied the human heart to so little purpose as not to perceive that it is of itself commonly indisposed to liberality. Even where a measure of religious feeling has conferred or enlarged this virtue, he knew that it requires frequent excitement to keep the flame alive; that if easily kindled by some affecting tale, or some present object, it may, by being left to itself, be as easily extinguished. He knew that impressions, if not immediately followed up, and acted upon, soon wear out; that a warm impulse, if left to cool, evaporates in mere profession. On this principle, then, we find him delicately reminding the Corinthians* of the zeal with which they had voluntarily engaged to raise a fund for the indigent, and insinuating the obligation to put

* 2 Cor. viii.

their own plan in execution, by distributing as well as collecting.

In suggesting this duty, he takes a circuitous path, by intimating the necessity of consistency in the conduct of Christians, by dwelling on the expediency of those who abounded in faith, and eloquence, and religious knowledge, abounding also in acts of beneficence; and by hinting that a high profession, without that broad principle of Christian charity, of which he knew alms-giving to be one fruit, would be an anomaly discreditable to themselves, and injurious to religion.

He then proposes to them, with the hand of a master, persuasions, arguments, and examples; he makes duties grow out of motives, and impresses both by actual instances. He mentions, in a sort of incidental way, the benevolence of a less opulent and less instructed people, the Macedonians; and, according to his invariable custom, produces their charity as growing out of their piety. *They gave themselves first unto the Lord*, and then, as the effect would naturally follow the cause, *they gave unto us by the will of God.* He informs them that this generous people did not wait to confer their bounty till it was solicited. He intimates that in this instance it was not those who wanted the charity, but those who gave it, "that pressed it with much entreaty;" instructively hinting that they had made the true use of afflictions, for that "their

poverty," instead of being pleaded as an apology for withholding their charity, "abounded to the riches of their liberality."

This was a powerful intimation that if these more indigent converts had been so bountiful, what might not be expected from the opulent metropolis of the regions of Achaia? It was also an experiment of their sincerity; for if they were more forward in profession, and more abundant in graces, would it not be an expected consequence, that they should be more abundant in works of charity?

And, finally, not contented with pressing upon them the example of a church of inferior note, he rises suddenly to the sublimest of all precedents. He does not, to *them*, quote any injunction of their Divine Master to charity, though with such injunctions the Gospel abounds; but in a manner strong, and instant, unexpectedly presses his *example*, and in the loftiest possible instance *; "for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." To what a trifle, to what a nothing, does he, by this admirable turn, reduce the largest pecuniary bounty, by directing their attention to the UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!

To the same purpose he directs his friends at

* 2 Cor. viii.

Ephesus, in his last affectionate discourse, to the *precept* of Christ. After the most powerful exhortations, he alludes to his having himself supplied his necessities by the labour of his own hands, in order to the exercise of charity; and then, lest they should suppose this to be any vaunt of his self-denial, rather than a declaration made to stimulate his hearers to similar industry, by a similar motive of charity, — he sums up the charge by a most powerful incitement, equal of itself to account for his own generosity, as well as to awaken theirs, producing the only posthumous quotation which Scripture has preserved of the Divine Instructor, — "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Another instance of his delicacy is, that in addressing the same people, when he would lower to its just inferiority the value of gifts and miraculous powers in comparison of *the more excellent way*, he does not directly point at their vanity and self-exaltation, but, with a refinement worthy the atention of all censors, he transfers the application to himself — though *I* (not though you) speak with the tongues of men and of angels; though *I* have the gift of prophecy and faith; though *I* bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, *I* am nothing.*

* 1 Cor. xiii.

As he thought it necessary in this address to adduce the strongest supposable instances, even instances which could not be thought to exist, there was no method which could so effectually expose the radical evil of uncharitableness with so little offence to those who were guilty of it, as to apply the imaginary case to his own person: nor could the most elaborate harangue on the beauty of charity have produced without it so powerful an effect: nor would any delineation of all the opposite vices, which were notoriously practised by the proud and sensual Corinthians, have affected them so much, as this beautiful portrait of the heavenly virtue, in which many of them were eminently deficient, and to whom the picture therefore presented such a contrast.

Yet, while he thus combated their preference of talents which might raise admiration, to those which tended to the general good, he thought proper to let them see, that the inferior value he set on them was not to screen or justify any ignorance of his own; and that, as is too commonly the case, he did not depreciate learning, because he did not possess it.

After having enjoined on the Thessalonians, that it was their duty "to love one another, as they were taught of God," lest it might look like a suspicion rather than a reminding, he encouragingly subjoins, — "and indeed ye do it." In the same spirit, after saying to the same

church, "Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another," he again intimates that they did not so much require to be instructed as congratulated, by adding, "even as also ye do."

Again, with a holy generosity, when he has any thing to notice which he can honestly praise, the commendation he bestows is undivided; when any unacceptable point to urge, he softens prejudices and courts compliance by mixing himself with the injunction, or involving himself in the censure; "let *us* cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." In lamenting, in the seventh of Romans, the dominion of sin, he speaks in his own person; in referring, in the subsequent chapter, to the dominion of grace, he extends the consolation to all believers. Another instance of judicious delicacy occurs in the second chapter of the Romans. After his severe censure of the vices of the Gentiles in the foregoing chapter, in proceeding to expose those of his own brethren, he avoids the offensive personality of saying — "therefore thou art inexcusable, O *Jew;*" but shields his reproof under the general term, "thou art inexcusable, O *Man.*" The Jews would not fail equally to apply the pointed censure to themselves, and with less irritation, than if it had been more direct. On every occasion which calls both qualities, gentleness and lowliness, into exercise, Saint Paul shows him-

self not only to be the humblest, but the politest of men.

Had a late noble and polished preceptor * been as conversant with the Holy Scriptures as he unquestionably was with polite literature, and had his principles been as sound as his taste, he would have had no occasion to look farther than the writings of Paul of Tarsus for the most complete illustration of that favourite maxim, the adoption of which he so repeatedly enjoined on his misguided pupil. His fine sense, under the influence of religion, would have led him, while he pressed the injunction, to give it all he wanted, — a right direction. He would have found the *suaviter in modo* accompany the *fortiter in rê* more uniformly in our Apostle than in any other writer.

In addition to the numberless instances of this union that occur in his Epistles, some of which we have already noticed, we cannot forbear mentioning, that, in writing to Timothy, he recommends "the spirit of power and of a *sound mind*," to which he subjoins, "*hold fast the form of sound words.*" But while he is so peremptory as to the force of the matter, he is not less attentive to the duty of mildness in the manner. He directs that the dictates of this sound mind be conveyed with *affection*, — that this form of sound words be comunicated with *love*; and, in

* Lord Chesterfield.

expatiating on these gentle graces, we must not forget the trying situation under which he exercised them.

In the days of prosperous fortune, we frequently see the appearance of cheerfulness and complacency in characters not remarkable for gentleness of mind; but Paul, under the most disastrous circumstances, never fails to exhibit the same amiable courtesies. It is therefore not easy to account for the prejudices of certain persons who always speak of him as a character of the most repulsive harshness.

I should be very unwilling to suspect, if a few of these critics are to be found among my own sex, that their dislike to this Apostle arises from a cause which is rather calculated to inspire gratitude than to provoke censure. His attention, in not being limited to their highest interests, but descending also to their minutest concerns, is a proof surely that he thought nothing beneath his notice which might raise the dignity, and add to the beauty of the female character. I should be very unwilling to suppose that their disapprobation arises from his having said — "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Nor could I presume to suspect, that his injunction of submission to their husbands, — of subordination *always*, and of silence *sometimes*, — can possibly be the cause of the hostility of any Christian ladies.

Still less would I venture to suppose, that

their displeasure is owing to his having recommended "that women should adorn themselves in *modest apparel;*" — nor that they should object to him for his preference of "shamefacedness" to "costly array," — of "sobriety" to "broidered hair," — "of good works" to "gold and pearls." *

It looks as if Saint Paul was of opinion, that the external appearance of women was an indication of the disposition of the mind; and this opinion, it is probable, made him so earnest in recommending these symbols of internal purity. He doubtless more strongly prohibits certain personal decorations, because they were the insignia of the notoriously unworthy females of his time. And it may be fairly presumed, that he never thought it could be construed into a hardship to be cautioned against wearing the badge of the profession of Lais.

If they are of opinion that his pointedly suggesting to them the ornaments of *a meek and quiet spirit* was at least a *superfluous* injunction, they will forgive him on the ground that he might not think it unnecessary, even to the most gentle, to "stir up their pure mind by way of *remembrance.*"

It is obvious that he could not possibly entertain any prejudices against a sex, in which he counted so may valuable friends. And let it

* 1 Tim. ii.

be seriously observed, that in whatever relates to pious affections, to Christian practice, to disinterested kindness, to zeal and diligence, there was obviously, in Saint Paul's estimation, neither male nor female. For do we not hear more of his affectionate regard for good women, and of his generous testimony to their worth, than we hear of the friendship with the sex of any other character in history? He delights in their praises. "Phebe" is warmly commended for her good offices "to the Saints at Rome," not only as having been an important assistant to the Apostle himself, but as "the succourer of many" Christians. "Priscilla" is honourably recorded as "his helper in Christ Jesus," as one who, with her husband, had "for his life laid down their necks." For this he thankfully observes, they are entitled not only to his thanks, but also to "the thanks of all the churches of the Gentiles." He acknowledges that "Mary had bestowed much labour on him and his converts." The name of "Julia" is perpetuated by his affectionate gratitude. That of "Chloe" stands prominent in his grateful page. "Tryphena and Tryphosa laboured much in the Lord." To the honour of British ladies be it remembered, that his friend "Claudia" was our countrywoman.*

* If any consideration could increase the interest we take in this blessed Apostle, it would be the strong pre-

Paul observes, that in the family of Timothy piety on the female side was hereditary; and he congratulates his friend on the excellent principles of his two maternal relations; and virtually ascribes to these instructresses, "that from a child he was acquainted with the Scriptures." Others he has named whose praise is not only in the churches, but whose names are in the Book of Life.

Are not these testimonies to female excellence from such an eulogist, and in such a cause,

"Above all Greek, above all Roman fame?"

If it stands recorded on the monument of a noble Englishman, as his highest distinction, that he was *friend to Sir Philip Sidney*, it stands engraven on a monument more durable than

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sumption, from testimonies recently adduced by a very learned, pious, and laborious prelate, that Saint Paul, in all probability, preached the Gospel in Britain. It is believed, after the most diligent research, that he visited this country with the returning family of Caractacus.

The author having been challenged in a periodical publication to produce any authority for asserting that Claudia was an Englishwoman, she refers the enquirer to "Henry's Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain," vol. i. p. 189. He says, "There seems to be strong evidence that there was at least one Briton of great merit and high rank among St. Paul's converts: this was Claudia, the wife of Pudens, so much celebrated by Martial, in two Epigrams." See Book iv. Ep. 13. Book xi. Ep. 54.

brass, even in the indestructible records of the Book of God, that so many women were the honoured friends of the chiefest Apostle of Jesus Christ!

If Saint Paul has been further accused by some persons of being an enemy to the state of marriage, it must be by those who forget to take into the account what a calamitous time that in which he wrote was for Christians, — who forget also his own express declaration, that the suggested suspension of such an union was "good for the *present distress.*" His compassionate mind forsaw the aggravated calamities to which the entrance into this tender connection would, at this particular juncture, involve the persecuted Christians. Is it not absurd to suppose that this zealous Apostle of Christ would suggest, as a permanent practice, a measure which must in a few years, if persisted in, inevitably occasion the entire extinction of Christianity itself?

Since, then, it would be derogatory to any, especially of my own sex, to suspect that their objection to Saint Paul can arise from any of these causes, may we not more rationally conjecture, that it proceeds from a prejudice lightly taken up on hearsay evidence — a prejudice propagated without serious enquiry, without having themselves closely examined his writings? Such an examination, to which they are now earnestly invited, would convince them that, to all his ex-

alted qualities, he added, in an eminent degree, urbanity, feeling, and liberality. . . .

But nothing more raises our veneration for Saint Paul's character than that his extreme sensibility of heart, and his rare delicacy in consulting the feelings of others, to which we have so frequently referred, are never exercised at the expense of his integrity. There are, as we have before observed, many upright minds, whose honesty is yet somewhat disfigured by a harsh temper. They are too conscientious to censure unjustly, but, knowing the censure to be merited, they have rather a pleasure in inflicting the correction. And though they are not glad the offender deserves it, they are not sorry it is *their* duty to impart it. Saint Paul never severely reproved another, without inflicting a wound on his own feelings. Yet though he would rather have spared another than himself, he would spare neither when the imperative voice of duty demanded plain dealing. Gentleness of manner in our Apostle was the fruit of his piety; the good breeding of some men is a substitute for theirs. . . .

The conduct of Saint Peter and Saint Paul presents at once a striking instance of the integrity of Christian friendship, and of the imperfection of human excellence. Before the apostles met at Antioch, Saint Peter seems to have erred in a material point, not in associating freely with the Gentiles, but in disingenuously

shunning their society on the return of his Jewish friends. This fear of human censure, which was not yet entirely extinguished in this great Apostle, while it strengthened the prejudices of the Jews, weakened the influence of the other apostles; misled Barnabas, "though a good man, and a just;" and not a little alarmed Saint Paul.

This vigilant minister thought the example so fraught with dangerous consequences, that he boldly remonstrated on this act of duplicity, — an act unlike the general character of Saint Peter, which, except in *one* awful instance, rather inclined to indiscreet frankness. Saint Paul himself informs us, in his Epistle to the Galatians, that he "withstood him to his face," not to gratify any resentment of his own, but because his friend "was to be blamed;" not privately, to spare his confusion, but "before them all," to avert the danger. Nor does this Christian sincerity appear to have interrupted their friendship; for it did not prevent Peter, on a subsequent occasion, from alluding to Paul as his *beloved brother*. From this circumstance we may learn, among other things, that the "fear of man" is one of the lingering evils which quit the human heart with the greatest reluctance; it shows that it may cleave to him, even in his renovated state and that therefore the same vigilance is necessary in this as in his previous character.

Saint Peter on this occasion gave an instance of that prompt repentance which he had so repeatedly manifested after the commission of an error. He offered no justification of his fault, but observed a meek silence. We learn, also, from the recorded failings of Saint Peter, that this *first* bishop of Rome, at least, did not arrogate to himself the claim of infallibility.

Saint Paul's kindness for his brethren never made him on any occasion lose sight of his courageous integrity. Considering the Gentile proselytes to be peculiarly the objects of his care, he resolutely defended them from the necessity of submitting to the law of Moses, thus preserving to the Gentiles their liberty, and to the Gospel its purity. By his firmness in this instance, a great obstacle to the reception of Christianity was removed.

May we here be allowed to observe, though somewhat out of place, that the characters of these two apostles are brought forward with such remarkable prominency and detail, in Sacred History, that it would be a subject well worthy some able pen to delineate the characters of the men, and interweave that of their writings, in some connected work. Thus placed in one frame, we should have a most interesting view of these two eminent persons, as the representatives of the Gentile and the Jewish Churches of Christ. This representation, incorporated with the circumstances which distinguished the first

promulgation of the Gospel, renders every particular concerning them highly affecting.

But to return. — It is to be observed as a fresh proof of the honesty and the spirit of self-renunciation which governed our Apostle, that when he reprehends the Corinthians for their imprudence in opposing one minister to another; — in the partiality and favouritism which he condemns, he makes no exception for Paul; the preference to himself above Apollos would not gratify a mind who, beside the danger to the flattered individual, saw the evil of opposition, of rivalry, of division in the Church, let who will be the person preferred.

He might have seen the dangerous and blinding influence of excessive prepossession and party attachment; when even his wise and virtuous contemporary, Seneca, could say of Cato, that he would rather esteem drunkenness a virtue than think Cato vicious. Nor would he have accepted of the same compliment which Cicero pays to the famous discourse on the Immortality of the Soul, — that though Plato had given no *reason* for it, yet his *authority* would have determined him.

CHAP. XIV.

SAINT PAUL ON THE LOVE OF MONEY.

AMONG the innumerable difficulties daily incident to the life of man, we may reckon as not among the least, the danger almost inseparable which attends the yet inevitable necessity for money. To reconcile integrity in the pursuit with innocence in the possession, is indeed to convert a perilous trial into a valuable blessing. Riches are no evil in themselves; the danger lies in not being able to manage the temptation they hold out to us. Even where the object is fairly pursued, and the acquisition not unfairly appropriated, a close application to the attainment of wealth is not without its snares to the most upright and liberal mind.

Even these better-disposed persons, in spite of purity of intention, and integrity of conduct, are in constant danger, while in pursuit of their object, of being entangled in complicated schemes, and overwhelmed with excessive solicitude; of being so overcharged with the cares of this world, as to put that world which is out of sight, out of mind also.

Others find, or fancy, that there is a shorter cut and a surer road to riches, than that in

which plodding industry holds on his slow and weary way. Industry is too dull for an enterprising spirit, integrity too scrupulous for the mind which is bent on a quick accomplishment of its object. The rewards of both are too remote, too uncertain, and too penurious for him "who maketh haste to be rich."

Much occurs to this point in Saint Paul's charge to Timothy, contained in the latter part of the last chapter of his first Epistle. Keeping one main end in view, the Apostle has indeed adopted a sort of concealed method, which requires some attention in the reader to discover. The general drift of this powerful exhortation is less to guard his beloved friend himself, who was perhaps in comparatively small danger from the temptation, than to induce him to warn those over whom he had the spiritual superintendence, against *the love of money*. In order to this, he does not immediately enter upon the main subject, but opens with another proposition, though in no very remote connection with it; a proposition the most important, and the most incontrovertible, namely, the immense gain to that soul which should combine *godliness* with *contentment*. He knew the union to be inseparable; that as godliness cannot subsist without contentment, so neither can true contentment spring from any other than an inward principle of real piety. All contentment, which has not its foundation in religion, is merely constitutional — animal hilarity, the flow

of blood and spirits in the more sanguine character; coldness and apathy in the more indifferent.

The pressing, then, this preliminary principle was beginning at the right end. A spirit of contentment is stifling covetousness in its birth; it is strangling the serpent in the cradle. Strong and striking are the reasons which the Apostle produces against discontent. To the indigent he says, "they brought nothing into this world," therefore they need the less murmur at possessing little in it. To the wealthy he holds out a still more powerful argument against *the rage canine of dying rich*, when he reminds them that they "can carry nothing out of it."

This reflection he intends at once to teach content to the poor, and moderation to the rich. The one should be satisfied with a bare subsistence, for the poorest cannot be poorer than when they came into the world; the other should not enlarge their desires for boundless indulgences, to the means of gratifying which, as well as to the gratification itself, the grave will so soon put a period.

The Apostle, having shown his deep insight into the human mind by this brief but just view of the subject, goes on to show the miserable consequences of discontent, or, which is the same thing, of an indefinite desire of wealth. "They that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and per-

dition." The words are weighty and powerful, and amply verified by experience, whether we consider money in its acquisition or in its possession. Its votaries "fall into a snare."

We have need to be more intently on the watch against the intrusions of this unsuspected sin, because there is not one which intrenches itself within so many creditable pretences; none in which more perverted passages are adduced from Scripture itself in its support. — "If any provide not for those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel," is frequently translated into a language foreign to its meaning, unfavourable to dispersing abroad. That charity begins at home, is not seldom pleaded as a reason why she should never stir out. There is one plea always ready as an apology for the eagerness for amassing superfluous wealth; and it is a plea which has a good look. *We must provide for our children* is the pretence, but we must indulge our avarice is the truth. The fact is, a man is *provident* for his family, but he is covetous for himself. The sordid mind and the grasping hand are too eager to put off their gratification to so remote a period as the future aggrandisement of those for whom they pretend to amass. The covetous man hungers for instant gratification, for the pleasure of counting his hoards, for the pride of "calling his lands by his own name."

Even many professing Christians who speak

with horror of public diversions, or even of human literature, as containing the essence of all sin, yet seem to see no turpitude, to feel no danger, to dread no responsibility, in any thing that respects this private, domestic, bosom-sin; this circumspect vice, this discreet and orderly corruption. Yet the sins which make no noise are often the most dangerous, and the vices of which the effect is to procure respect, instead of contempt, constitute the most deadly snare.

Wit has not been more alert in shooting its pointed shafts at avarice, than argument has been busy in its defence. No advocate, it is true, will venture to defend it under its own proper character; but avarice takes the license used by other felons, and, by the adoption of an *alias*, escapes the reprobation attached to its own name. Covetousness has a bad sound; it is, if we may be allowed the application, a moral cacophony, a fault which no critic in ethics can at any rate tolerate. Is it not a tacit confession of its hateful nature, that its possessor never avows its real name, even to himself? This quality not only disguises its turpitude by concealment, but shrouds its own character under the assumed name of half the virtues. When accused, it can always make out a good case. It calls itself frugality, moderation, temperance, contempt of show, self-denial, sobriety; — thus at once cherishing the pleasure and the profit of the sin, and escaping its infamy.

Even the most careless in conduct, the most

negligent of character, he who never defends himself against the charge of what he calls the more generous vices, indignantly fights off the imputation of this. While he deems it a venial offence to deny himself no guilty pleasures, to pay no just debts, he would repel the accusation of being sordid as strongly as a man of principle. Yet at the same time his thirst of money may be as ardent, in order to make a bad use of it, as his who covets it without intending to use it at all.

Let not therefore "the snares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches," make us forget that he who covets money as a means to other forbidden gratifications is as much guilty of covetousness as he who desires it as an end. He who makes it the minister to improper indulgences is not less criminal as an example, and is far more criminal as to the effects of his conduct, than he who covets in order that he may amass. The Word of Inspiration *calls* covetousness idolatry: but are not inordinate lovers of pleasure, for which money supplies the aliment, idolaters also; inasmuch as the sacrifices they offer to their idol prevent their being "lovers of God?"

If this ensnaring love of money assumes to be connected with the sober qualities, which is commonly the case in quiet minds, it is far otherwise in those of a different order. In all minds it is the enemy of charity. The demands of this great duty are amongst the first and most easy

sacrifices at the shrine of Mammon; more especially where a too large scale of expense has been established, and a reduced expenditure is thought necessary, how often do we see the first deduction made, by withholding a little paltry sum which had been assigned to charity; a sum perhaps originally disproportionate to the general habits of expense; while no blow is aimed at the redundancies of a devouring luxury, of an inordinate vanity; though the retrenchment in the first instance will scarcely be felt, while, in the latter, it might restore the power, not only of perpetuating, but of augmenting beneficence!

But the mischief is of still wider extent. In more animated minds the love of money is frequently allied to the bolder vices; to rapacity, to oppression, to injustice; and as these more formidable sins are usually practised for the purpose of obtaining the means of splendour, magnificence, and show, wealth, even thus obtained, not seldom procures its own protection. The gay and unthinking, whose grand object in life is to multiply the scenes of dissipation, and who enjoy these pleasant effects of their neighbour's vices, by participating in the amusements they procure, are not very inquisitive as to the source from whence these prodigal pleasures flow. The unsuccessful aspirer after forbidden wealth is indeed not only avoided, but stigmatised; with them his crime lies not so much in the attempt as in the failure;

while prosperous corruption easily works itself into favour: having first struggled for oblivion for the cause, it soon obtains praise for the effect, and finds little difficulty in maintaining a station, which it required some management to reach.

But if there are few vices which separate a man less from the friendship of the world than avarice, there are few that separate him more widely from the duty which he owes to his neighbour, or stand more fearfully between his soul and his God; "it drowns men in destruction and perdition." When the eye is first opened on the eternal world, how will many among the rich, the powerful, the flattered, be astonished to find all the attributes which made them great, extinct; all the appendages which made them arrogant, vanished; to find —— nothing but themselves!

It is to be observed, that Saint Paul not only calls the love of money an evil, for in this view, where the passion is acknowledged, it is commonly considered; but he proceeds further to denominate it the "root," the radical principle, not only of one evil, but of *all* evil. Besides that there is scarcely any sin which the determined lovers of money will not be led to commit in order to gain money, there are also, as we have observed, innumerable evils in its misapplication when gained; these he probably included in their general condemnation. Other vices are loved for their own sake; but riches

are idolised for the sake of every indulgence of which they procure the enjoyment, of every vice to which that enjoyment leads.

This it is which makes riches the general centre of human desire. They who do not accumulate money, persuade themselves that they do not love it; but many love it for far other ends than to hoard it. Saint Paul knew that it was the *universal* snare; a trap appropriately baited with every allurement congenial to the taste of the person on whom the temptation is to be practised; — to the elegant desires of the more refined, or the coarser appetite of the more grossly voluptuous. The sensual, the aspiring, the vain, and the prodigal, all consider it as the grand indispensable material with which to build their visionary fabrics of happiness.

Money is the most efficient tool with which ambition works; it is the engine of political mischief, and of domestic oppression; the instrument of individual tyranny, and of universal corruption. Money is the elemental principle of pleasure; it is the magnet which, to the lover of flattery, attracts parasites; which the vain man loves for the circle it describes about him, and the train which it draws after him, even more than for the actual enjoyments which it procures him. It is the grand spring and fountain of pride and self-sufficiency, more especially to those who have nothing better to value themselves upon; to those of inferior education, suddenly raised to wealth or power;

to those who are deficient in intellectual as well as spiritual endowments. In short, as the fabled king turned every thing into gold which he touched, so its craving possessor turns gold into every thing which he desires. It is the substance and the essence which, under endless modifications, ensnares, betrays, and finally disappoints the heart of man.

After enumerating the various moral dangers to which the love of money lays the heart open, the Apostle adverts to its highest possible corruption; he declares it to be the root of apostasy. He doubtless alluded to his own immediate knowledge of certain persons, who, while they "coveted after riches, had erred from the faith." There is something extremely touching in this effect of covetousness, which Saint Paul appears himself to have witnessed among some of whom he had once seemed to hope better things; — *they had pierced themselves through with many sorrows*, with incurable anguish perhaps, for that abandonment of God into which covetousness had seduced them.

It was, probably, these living instances of the ruin of virtuous principles by this vice, which led him to warn even Timothy, so great a proficient in piety, of the perils attached to the love of money. And nothing affords matter of more awful reflection to the most sincere Christian, than that Saint Paul thought it necessary to caution his "dearly beloved Timothy, his own

son in the faith," Timothy, the exemplary Bishop of Ephesus, against the snares of this insidious enemy. Shall a common, shall even a sincere Christian, think vigilance superfluous, when this distinguished Saint was not only charged to caution others, but to guard himself against this most treacherous of all temptations.

There is something peculiarly solemn in the Apostle's mode of adjuring Timothy to avoid this sin. The single apostrophe, "O man of God!" would be a panoply against the temptation. The implied impossibility that *a man of God could* be a coveter of money, was equal to a thousand arguments against it.

The twofold guard with which he arms Timothy is equally applicable to all Christians. He does not say, deliberate on your danger, reason on the temptation, produce your strong arguments against it, but, *flee these things*. Flight is in this case the only courage; escape the only security; turning your back upon the enemy, the only sure means of conquering him.

But Saint Paul does not only direct what is to be avoided, but what is to be done. The flight from sin is not a mere negative act, it involves positive duties: in his view it involves *following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*. All these spiritual and moral graces he draws up in battle array, to assist as auxiliaries in the combat he is about to enjoin. He intimates that the Christian will

have to maintain a conflict with corruption and temptation, during the whole scene of action. Going on to sustain the metaphor drawn from the military warfare, he calls on Timothy *as a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ;* and while he exhorts him to *fight the good fight of faith,* he presents to his view the crown of victory. He assures him that it will not be a mere gratuitous fight, *he will lay hold on eternal life.*

He reminds Timothy of his special vocation "whereunto thou art called." He animates him with the quickening recollection of the glorious profession which he had made, and that, not in the retirement of devotion, but "before many witnesses;" intimating how much the honour of the Gospel is concerned in the proficiency, the steadfastness, the perseverance to the end, of all its professors, especially of its appointed teachers. He not only reminds him of his profession at his baptism, and consecration to the ministry, but, in order to elevate his mind to the *high*est pitch, he adjures him *in the sight of God who quickeneth all things,* and could raise him to immortal glory; and, as if he would fill his mind with every grand and awful image, reminds him of the "good confession made by the Divine Confessor before Pontius Pilate," exhorting him, from all these lofty motives, to "keep this commandment spotless and unrebukable, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ!" In so doing men could not reproach

him, religion would not be wonnded by him, and his Saviour would finally receive him, with the plaudit which he has promised, and the crown which he has purchased.

The sublime doxology which follows; the ascription to God, of all power, praise and dominion, glory and immortality; the fervour of his mind, rapt as it seems to be with the present view of the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, Lord of lords, immortal, invisible, unapproachable, and surrounded with visions of glory — do not make the Apostle forget to revert to the main object of his charge, the danger of riches; or rather, the anticipation of future bliss had fired his soul with more intense zeal against that sin which he thought most likely to shut out his beloved converts from the enjoyment of it; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches."

Having thus shown the nature of riches, — "uncertain" in every thing but their danger, — he soon despatches the concluding and most pleasant part of his office, by showing how the Christian use of riches may convert a snare into a blessing; an instrument of ruin into an evidence of faith. He proposes a scheme of moral usury, shows that there is a species of avarice which he not only allows but enjoins, *that they who are rich in this world* increase the interest of their money by laying it out in good works

that *they lay up in store against the time to come;* against a remoter period than that for which the covetous provide. This is beating the miser at his own weapons; this is indeed giving perpetuity to riches: what they lay out for the poor they lay up for themselves, by *lending unto the Lord.* This is a legitimate love of money, this is a covetousness worthy of a Christian. This is indeed lodging their treasure beyond the reach of moth, rust, or thieves.

He cautions them against the love of riches from their *uncertainty;* an argument likely to weigh with those who are blind to higher considerations; an argument more illustrated *to us* by actual instances in the late frenzy of revolution, than in any other period of history. He then contrasts what is uncertain with what is solid and durable. That confidence which is not to be placed in "uncertain riches," he directs to be transferred to the "living God," the foundation of all substantial opulence, the bestower of all the good that is enjoyed; the giver of all "the power to get wealth," and of the heart to use it to his glory. This readiness "to distribute," this willingness "to communicate," these unequivocal fruits of faith, obedience, and love, not the price of heaven, but the evidences of faith in him who died to purchase it for them, will not be rejected by real Christians, after HIS declaration, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

When we consider the contradiction which the lives of some authors on religious subjects form with their writings, may they not be said somewhat to resemble the workmen employed in building the ark? These infatuated men spent years in preparing an asylum from the deluge, without practically believing that it would ever take place. While they were mechanically employed in working for the salvation of others, their labour made no provision for their own safety. The sweeping flood descends, but the builders are excluded from the very refuge which they have assisted in providing!

How different was the conduct of our Apostle? His exhortations in this, as in all other instances, derive great additional weight from the consistency of his conduct with his writings. The philosopher Seneca, composed his excellent book of Ethics, in the same city, and nearly at the same time, in which this Epistle to Timothy was written. He suffered also a violent death under the same Roman emperor with Saint Paul. In the writings of the philosopher are many beautiful passages directed against the vice we have been considering, and no one ever inveighed more pointedly against the luxurious indulgences to which riches are applied. Yet Seneca, first the disciple of the abstinent school of Pythagoras, and afterwards of the self-denying sect of the Stoics, made himself, by his inordinate desire of amassing wealth, the richest

man in Rome, and by his passion for splendour, the most magnificent.

This inconsistency of profession with practice at once illustrates the exact difference between speculation and conviction, conceit and truth; and serves, without any other arguments, which, however, are not wanting, to demonstrate the real character of Seneca. Though acquainted probably with the religion of Jesus Christ, and not improbably with our Apostle himself, from his near connection with Gallio, one of Saint Paul's judges, yet he can never be considered as its convert: and trying them by the testimony of their lives, we are obliged to conclude of these two martyred moralists, that Paul lived a Christian, and Seneca died a Heathen.*

* Gallio was eldest brother to Seneca, and uncle to the poet Lucan.

CHAP. XV.

ON THE GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY, AS SEEN IN SAINT PAUL.

HAD a sinful human being, ignorant of Christianity, labouring under the convictions of a troubled conscience, and dreading the retribution which that conscience told him his offences merited, — had such a being, so circumstanced, been called upon to devise the means of pardon and acceptance from an offended Creator, how eagerly, in the hope of relieving his tormented spirit, would he have put his imagination to the stretch! How busily would he have sharpened his invention, to suggest something difficult, something terrible, something impossible; something that should have exhausted all human means, that should put nature to the rack, — penances, tortures, sacrifices, — all Lebanon for a burnt-offering, thousands of rams for an atonement, rivers of oil for an oblation; — still concluding that he must perform the act with his own hands, still expecting that himself must be the agent of his own deliverance!

But when a full offer of peace, of pardon, of reconciliation, comes from the offended party, comes voluntarily, comes gratuitously, comes,

not with the thunders of the burning mount, but in the still small voice of benignity and love, — free love, benignity as unsought as unmerited; — when the trembling penitent is assured, in the cheering words of our Apostle, that he shall be "justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," — when he is assured that all that is demanded on his part of the compact is, to accept the propitiation made for his sins, through the forbearance and tender mercy of God; — when he hears that to him, and not to him only, but to all who will accept it on the offered terms, of faith and repentance, this previously inconceivable proposal is made; — who would doubt that, overwhelmed with joy and gratitude at the report of a world redeemed, he would eagerly fly to lay hold on an offer, not only beyond his hope or expectation, but beyond his possibility of conception?

Yet is not the fact too often directly the reverse? His pride had suggested to him, that if some difficult thing were to be done, he should have done it himself, — if something were to be suffered in the way of hardship and austerity, or something achieved in the way of glorious enterprise; something that should be splendid in the act, which should bring renown to the doer, — then his natural powers would be set at work, his energies exerted, his emulation kindled, for he would then become the procurer of his own reward, the purchaser, or rather the rightful possessor, of a heaven of his own earning.

But while God, by a way of his own devising, by a process of his own conducting, had made foolish the wisdom of this world, and baffled the vain and impracticable schemes of impotent man, for effecting his deliverance by any conception or act of his own, — does not man's unwillingness to partake of the offered mercy look as if his proud heart did not choose to be freely forgiven, as if his haughty independence revolted at a plan, in which, though he has all the benefit, he has none of the merit? Does it not seem as if he would improve the terms of the treaty? as if he would mend the plan of salvation, and work it up into a kind of partnership scheme, in which his own contribution should have the predominance?

But it will be urged, men do not say this: we reply, they do not profess it in words; but do not some say it virtually, when they practically decline the terms; or, if they do not entirely disbelieve them, give at least a reluctant, and partial, and qualified assent?

With the genius of Christianity, with its peculiarities, with its applicableness to the wants of man, the whole soul of Saint Paul was singularly imbued. His acute mind, his lofty qualities, his penetrating spirit, and his renovated heart, entered profoundly into the character and essence of the Gospel. His mind was a transcript of divine truth; his life an exemplification of it. What he conceived intimately, he imparted

explicitly. To combat the rebellion of the natural man, against the salvation wrought for him, is the leading object of his endeavour. He who was always looking unto Jesus, as the author and finisher of his own faith, uniformly holds him out to others, as the sum and substance of theirs.

He delights to dwell on the Divine compassion; he introduces it under every form, he illustrates it by every figure, he magnifies it under every mode of expression. Reconciliation is the grand object of his mission. He exhibits the difference between the conduct of the Redeemer, and that of man, in this negotiation. In human cases it is usually the offender who makes the advances, who tries all means to recover the friend he has lost, the patron he has offended. But here he shows it to be just the reverse. Here it is the insulted benefactor, here it is the injured friend, who conjures the offender to return, who entreats the enemy to be reconciled, who promises not only pardon but immunity, not only oblivion but reward. The penitent is every where encouraged to believe that his offences are forgiven, that his sins have been punished in his Saviour; that the Judge has not only pardoned the malefactor, but has suffered in his stead.

The Apostle demonstrates, that God is the fountain, not only of our mercies, but of our virtues — if we turn, it is he who turns us — if

we pray, it is he who invites us — if we apply to him, it is he who first draws us — if we repent, it is "the grace of God which leads us to repentance." Whatever right thing there may be in us, it is not our natural property, but his gift. His bounty is the spring from which our goodness, if we have any, flows; instead of our goodness being the original motive of his love.

Hitherto we have sketched, though very superficially, Christianity as to its spirit, its design, its offers. — We now turn to what is our more immediate object, its practical effects, its general results, its transforming nature, its renovating power.

If the law of God is spiritual, it is not a conformity to its letter, nor is it a partial conformity to its spirit, that constitutes Christian obedience. Christian obedience is ascertained by its universality. It esteems *all* God's precepts concerning *all* things to be right; it hates *every* false way. The prohibitory as well as the preceptive principle of the Gospel is general. Though it makes much allowance for the infirmity of the act, it makes none as to its spirit; it confines its prescription to no particular duties, makes no exception for favourite virtues, to the exclusion of such as are more difficult, or less palatable.

If Scripture had barely *informed* us, that it was the perfection of the Christian character to

unite in itself, not only different, but opposite qualities; if we had been only *told* that firmness is little worth, unless combined with meekness; that integrity is imperfect, if separated from humility; that the warmest zeal for the good of others, must, in order to be acceptable, be connected with the most vigilant attention to our own heart; that generosity is a spurious virtue, if disconnected with self-denial; that religion requires, with a consciousness of divinely infused strength, a deep sense of our own helplessness; that while it demands a trust in God, so complete, that we must renounce every other trust, it demands also a holiness so exact, as if we trusted only in ourselves; if we had been only shown, in some thin theory, that it is the genius of Christianity thus to amalgamate contraries, to blend into one common principle the deepest self-abasement with the most active exertions—if all this had only been proposed to us in an abstract way, or drily and didactically taught, we should have conceived Christianity to be a system of pleasing paradoxes, an invention of beautiful impracticabilities; we should have thought it an institution fabricated for some world different from ours, for some race of immaculate beings, for angels who had stood firm in their pristine purity, for creatures who had never lost the impression of the Divine image; but never could we have imagined it to be a practical religion intended for the fallible, peccable children of fallen mortality.

It has, however, as we observed in an early chapter, pleased Infinite Wisdom to give us, in the sacred records, striking solutions of this enigma, actual instances of conflicting attributes in men of like passions with ourselves, men possessing qualities which would seem to exclude each other, combining contrarieties of excellence. Among these there is not a brighter exemplification than the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

Yet there is nothing in this high description which exclusively belongs to Saint Paul. Nothing which does not address itself individually to us. Though converted by a miracle, favoured with Divine revelations, writing, and frequently acting, under immediate inspiration; yet was he, in the ordinary condition and transactions of life, weak and helpless. Though sustained by Divine power, he did not monopolise it. Nor was it specially vouchsafed to *him* for his common comforts, or earthly deliverances. It was not given to rescue him from suffering, but to uphold him under it. He was, like his Lord, exposed to all the exigencies of a laborious and afflicted life. He was obnoxious to all its trials, liable to the snares of the world, and to the temptations of the great spiritual enemy. If his conflicts were more in number, and greater in magnitude, than ours, he obtained victory over them by a power to which he directs *us*, a power to which we have equal access.

The same sincerity of petition will procure the same gracious assistance; — that grand resolver of doubt, that omnipotent vanquisher of difficulty — *my grace is sufficient for thee* — though directly addressed to Saint Paul, is also, through him, addressed to every one of us.

It was probably a charge brought against Saint Paul, that his conversion contributed little to the improvement of his moral and civil virtues. But such an allegation, if made, must have come from the party which he had quitted. They considered him as an apostate from the faith; they considered his zeal for the religion which he had once persecuted as a degrading inconsistency, as a defection from all moral goodness. His subsequent life, which afforded the most lively comment on the new doctrines, is the best answer to such an allegation. His perseverance afforded a rational conviction, that the change was the effect neither of fear nor of fancy. A conduct corresponding to his first emotions, and a continually growing excellence, completely repel the charge. He who, in the first moment of alarm, exclaimed, *What wilt thou have me to do?* did through life all which he then desired to be taught.

Every convert should endeavour to produce, in his measure and degree, the same proofs that he too is under no deception; he should give the same evidence, that he is misled by no fanciful illumination; and this can be effected only

by exhibiting a change of conduct, not only obvious, but permament; not only during the first terrors or transports of which we so frequently hear, but by a steady consecration of his whole future life to his Creator. Every other plea may be illusion, may be hypocrisy; while this test being visible, will be incontrovertible. The more the penitent is observed, the more this paramount evidence will eventually remove all doubts. By his patient continuance in well doing, he will be likely to lessen the objection not only to the individual professing it, but to the doctrine itself.

When we compare this blessed Apostle, who now fears to wound the *feelings* of others, with the same man who had lately no regard even for their *lives;* — the man who now treats with tenderness the very *prejudices* of Christians, with him who "before made havoc of the church;" — the man whom we find weeping over all sufferings but his own, with him who had "persecuted to the death;" — when we consider him who aforetime was "binding and imprisoning the followers of Jesus," now burning with zeal for his cause, though he knew that punishments the most severe awaited himself; — him who had been assisting at the death of the first martyr, now heroically pursuing that course which he was forewarned would lead to his own martyrdom; — the man who "destroyed them who called on the name of Jesus," "now confounding the

Jews, and proving that this is indeed the very Christ;" — shall we, when we see these astonishing results, refuse our homage to the transforming genius of Christianity — to that power which enabled this fierce assailant to "put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?"

Saint Paul did not furnish such authentic evidence of that power of God which produced this total revolution in his character, merely by suffering *death* in confirmation of his faith — for error has had its confessors, and idolatry its martyrs — but he proved it by the persevering holiness of a long and tormented life; he proved it by suffering himself as courageously as he taught others to suffer. May we venture to add, he gave a testimony, less accredited, perhaps, but almost more convincing? The conceited Pharisee is become the humblest of men; the proud bigot is meekness personified. This *change of disposition* is the surest test of his total renovation. The infusion of a heavenly temper, where a bad one had predominated, is one of the rarest results of Almighty power. And it not only affords a substantial proof of the individual improvement, but furnishes one of the most striking displays of the distinguishing character of our religion.

It is owing to this specific character of Christianity that, while philosophy had gloried in its

wisdom, Saint Paul glories only in his weakness. If he ever exults, it is in the strength of the hand which employs him. His confidence in this supernatural strength explains his paradox, *when I am weak, then I am strong.* Sometimes, indeed, he boasts of himself, but it is always of his disadvantages. He avows his determination not to avail himself of any personal acquirements; and after his utmost success in "winning souls," he expressly disclaims that *excellency of speech* which others consider as the grand instrument for converting them. He strips himself of all ground of boasting; acknowledges that he comes *in weakness, in fear, in much trembling;* and requires that the glory of every success which attended his labours might be wholly ascribed to God. He demonstrates that all the wisdom with which the world had been dazzled was to be eclipsed by that *hidden wisdom* "which none of the princes of this world knew," and their ignorance of which was the only extenuation that he offers of their guilt in "crucifying the Lord of Glory." *

The same trials seem in some measure to have been reserved for Saint Paul which had been sustained by his Lord. This was perhaps determined, that he might glorify God by meeting them in the same spirit; and thus might leave a human example of the highest

* 2 Cor. ii.

Christian attainment. Of Jesus it is recorded, that "his disciples all forsook him and fled." Like him Saint Paul declared, in his last appearance before the Roman tribunal, "no man stood by me, but all men forsook me." As the Master had prayed for his cruel enemies, — "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," so Paul interceded for his faithless friends — "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Even under this severest blow to natural feelings, the desertion of those we love, holy Paul forgets not to glorify "the Lord, who stood by him, and strengthened him;" and who enabled him to act a part consistent with his Christian profession, and to bear an honourable testimony to the truth of the Gospel before his persecuting judges.

Thus again did he resemble his great Exemplar, "who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession." And may we not suppose that this example of heroic constancy assisted in sustaining our Latimers and our Ridleys, when, by manifesting a similar spirit under similar sufferings, they showed their cause and their confidence to be so nearly allied to those of the Apostle?

Nor does Christianity (as we shall have occasion to observe more at large hereafter) limit the exercise of this temper to apostles and martyrs, but enjoins it under the inferior trials of common life.

Finally, the judgments of heaven bore the same kind of testimony to the truth of the Gospel in the prison at Philippi as it had done on the Mount of Calvary. In the one instance, "Behold the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." In the other, "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors were opened, the chains were loosened, the captives were freed, the jailor was converted!"* Are not all these circumstances, taken together, a clear solution of Saint Paul's otherwise obscure declaration, that he thus *filled up what remained of the sufferings of Christ?* Did the sense of victory, did the joys of peace, did the honourable scars brought from the field of battle, ever excite such a feeling in the mind of the conqueror as Saint Paul felt at thus *bearing in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus*, and at the encouragement which they gave him to achieve new conquests?

What a strange use does Paul immediately make of his scourgings and imprisonment at Philippi! He uses them as an argument why his *entrance into Thessalonica was not in vain!* His shameful treatment at the former place, instead of intimidating him from further services, redoubled his courage to preach to the Thessalonians that very Gospel which had

* Acts, xvi. 26.

procured him such disgraceful treatment at Philippi. On this occasion he adduces a touching instance of the effect of his imprisonment, which, though striking, is not singular to those who understand the genius of Christianity. His unjust captivity, as the champion of the new faith, which in the opinion of those to whom the motive principle of our religion is unknown, would have been likely to extinguish the flame, had only served in his estimation to fan it. Others, timid before, "grew more confident," by the very bonds which were intended to discourage them. Their fears were absorbed in their faith, and the chains of the Saint caused a wider and more rapid diffusion of that Gospel which they were intended to stop. And though "some preached Christ of contention," yet holy Paul was so exhilarated by the general success, that he was less solicitous about the motives of the instructor than the progress of the instruction. He looked for the benefit rather from the power of the Gospel, than from the purity of the preacher.

We have repeatedly observed that an ardent affection was one of the prominent features in Saint Paul's character; it is natural, therefore, that the expression of this temper should be particularly stamped on his writings. If he expresses his satisfaction with more unmingled delight to any one church than another, it seems to be to that which he had planted at Philippi. He appears to repose himself with

grateful joy on their fidelity, and with assured hope in their progress. In every prayer he makes request for them, with a joy which manifested the dependence he had on their perseverance. This was a proof that his "confidence" did not abate the necessity of his supplications, though he made them with a joy which this confidence inspired. While his knowledge of the fluctuations of the human heart led him to rejoice with trembling, yet the continuance of this favoured church in the principles into which they had been initiated by his visit to them ten years before, gave him a reasonable ground of their persevering steadfastness.

This church afforded an eminent proof not only of its attachment to Saint Paul, its founder, but of its zeal for Christianity. Not satisfied with advancing the credit of religion, and assisting its ministers in their own country, with a truly catholic spirit, these Philippian converts repeatedly sent money to Paul at Thessalonica, that, by relieving the Christians there from the expense which would attend the establishment of the Gospel, they might be led to conceive a higher idea of the religion itself by the disinterestedness of its ministers. This generous superiority to any lucrative views gave Saint Paul a marked advantage over their philosophical teachers, who bestowed no gratuitous instruction.

The Apostle gratefully considers it as one of the practical effects of the confirmed piety of his beloved Philippians, that they were so liberally kind to himself — he received their affectionate services to the aged, afflicted, and now imprisoned servant of Jesus Christ, as a proof of their fealty to his Lord. An ambassador, though in bonds, will still be considered as a representative of his king by every liege subject. With what cordiality does he solemnly attest the Omniscient to the truth of his attachment to them, and his desire to see them!

Highly, however, as he estimates their religious improvement, he does not consider them as having attained that elevation of character which renders monition superfluous, or advancement unnecessary; — for he exhorts even "as many as be perfect," that they press forward and reach forth unto those things which are before: in his usual humble way identifying himself with those he is admonishing — "let *us* be thus minded."

Again. — "Though he is confident that he that had begun a good work in them" will accomplish it, yet they must still work out their salvation; but lest they might be tempted to value themselves on their exertions, they are instantly reminded who it is that "worketh in them to will and to do." Though they *professed* the Gospel, "their conversation must be such as becometh it." To accomplish his full

desire, their love, already so great, must "abound more and more." Nor would he be satisfied with an ignorant or disorderly piety —their love must manifest itself *more and more* "*in knowledge and judgment:*" in knowledge, by perpetual acquisition; in judgment, by a practical application of that knowledge.

How little, in the eyes of the sober Christian, does the renowned Roman who, scarcely half a century before, sacrificed his life to his disappointment, at this very Philippi, appear, in comparison of the man who addressed this Epistle to the same city! Saint Paul was not less brave than Brutus, but his magnanimity was of a higher strain. Saint Paul was exercised in a long series of sufferings, from which the sword of Brutus, directed by any hand but that of Paul himself, would have been a merciful deliverance. Paul, too, was a patriot, and set a proper value on his dignity as a Roman citizen. He too was a champion for freedom; but he fought for that higher species of liberty,

> "Unsung by Poets, and by Senators unprais'd."

Was it courage of the best sort, in the Roman enthusiast for freedom, to abandon his country to her evil destiny, at the very moment when she most needed his support? Was it true generosity or patriotism, after having killed his friend, to whom he owed his fortune and his

life *, — usurper though he was, — voluntarily to leave this adored country a prey to *inferior* usurpers? Though Cæsar had robbed Rome of her liberty, why should Brutus rob her of his own guardian virtues? Why not say to the Romans, as Saint Paul did to the Philippians — "*Though I desire to depart, nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you?*" This would have been indeed patriotism, because it would have been disinterested. Was not Saint Paul's the truer heroism? He also was in a *strait between two* events, life and death. He knew what Brutus, alas! did not know; "that to die was gain;" but, instead of deserting his cause, by a pusillanimous self-murder, he submitted to live for its interest. The gloomy despair of the Stoic, and the cheerful submission of the Saint, present a lively contrast of the effects of the two religions on two great souls.

It is a coincidence too remarkable to be passed over in silence, that Saint Paul was directed by "*a vision from heaven*" to go to Philippi; — that Brutus was summoned to the same city by his *evil genius*. The hero obeyed the phantom; the Apostle was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision;" — to what different ends let the concluding histories of the devoted suicide and the devoted martyr declare! — Will it be too fanciful to add, that the spectre which

* At the battle of Pharsalia.

lured the Roman to his own destruction, and the vision which in the same place invited the Apostle to preach salvation to others, present no unapt emblem of the opposite genius of Paganism and Christianity?

CHAP. XVI.

SAINT PAUL'S RESPECT FOR CONSTITUTED AUTHORITIES.

THE Gospel was never intended to dissolve the ancient ties between sovereign and subject, master and servant, parent and child, but rather to draw them closer, to strengthen a natural by a lawful and moral obligation. As the charge of disaffection was from the first most injurious to the religion of Jesus, it is obvious why the Apostle was so frequent, and so earnest, in vindicating it from this calumny.

It is apparent from every part of the New Testament, that our Lord never intended to introduce any change into the civil government of Judea, where he preached, nor into any part of the world to which his religion might extend. As his object was of a nature specifically different, his discourses were always directed to that other object. His politics were uniformly conversant about his own kingdom, which was not of this world. If he spake of human governments at all, it was only incidentally, as circumstances led to it, and as it gave occasion to display or enforce some act of obedience. He discreetly entangled the Pharisees in the insi-

dious net which they had spread for him, by directing, in answer to their ensnaring question, that the things which belonged even to the sovereign whom they detested, should be "rendered" to him.

Saint Paul exhibited at once a striking proof of the soundness of his own principles, and of the peaceable character of Christianity, in his full and explicit exposition of the allegiance due to the ruling powers. His thorough conviction that human nature was, and would be, the same in all ages, led him to anticipate the necessity of impressing on his converts the duty of rescuing the new religion, not only from present reproach, but from that obloquy to which he foresaw that it would always be exposed.

He knew that a seditious spirit had been alleged against his Lord. He knew, that as it was with the Master, so it must be with the servant. One was called a "pestilent fellow;" another "a stirrer-up of the people;" others were charged with "turning the world upside down." These charges, invented and propagated by the Jews, were greedily adopted by the persecuting Roman emperors, and their venal instruments; and have always been seized on and brought forward as specious pretences for exile, proscription, massacre.

Many of the Protestant Reformers have since been accused, or suspected, of the same factious disposition; and if a similar accusation

has not been boldly produced, it has been insidiously implied, against some of the most faithful friends of the government, and of the ecclesiastical constitution of our own country; as if a more than ordinary degree of religious activity rendered their fidelity to the state suspicious, and their hostility to the church certain. We do not deny, that though Christianity has never been the cause, it has often been made the pretence for disaffection. Religion has been made the handle of ambition by Popery, and of sedition by some of the Puritan Reformers. Corruption in both cases was stamped upon the very face of those who so used it. Nothing, however, can be more unfair, than eagerly to charge religious profession with such dangers, which yet the instances alluded to have given some of our high-churchmen a plausible plea for *always* doing. This plea, though in certain cases justly furnished, has been most unjustly used by being applied to instances to which it is completely inapplicable.

For the truth is, that a factious spirit is so far from having any natural connection with the religion of the Gospel, that it stands in the most direct opposition to it. Saint Paul, in taking particular care to vindicate Christianity from any such aspersion, shows that obedience to constituted authorities is among the express commands of our Saviour. He might have added to the strength of his assertion, by ad-

ducing his example also; for in order to be enabled to comply with a law of Government, Christ did, what he had never done to supply his own necessities — he wrought a miracle. And we have here a proof that he did not conform to the law in this instance *only;* for when the tax-gatherers enquired of Peter whether his master paid tribute, he simply answered, *Yes:* this affirmative making it clear that it was the custom of Jesus to pay whatever taxes were usually paid by others.

The Apostle, knowing the various shifts of men, from their natural love of gain, to evade paying imposts, is not content with a general exhortation on this head, but urges the duty in every conceivable shape, and under every variety of name, as if to prevent the possibility of even a verbal subterfuge — *tribute, custom, fear, love, honour, fidelity in payment;* and then, having exhausted particulars, he sums them up in a general — *owe no man any thing;* thus he leaves not only no public opening, but no secret crevice to fiscal fraud.*

Perhaps it is an evidence, in this instance, rather of the sagacious, than of the prescient, spirit which governed Saint Paul, that there is as much tendency to it NOW as when the Apostle first published his prohibitory letter. The known principles of human nature, as we have

* Romans, xiii.

just observed, might lead him to expect it alike in all ages. At the same time we cannot be too mindful of that command of Inspiration, which by enjoining us to render to all their dues, has enlarged the sphere of civil duty to the very utmost limit of human actions. And it is no little credit to Christianity, that intimations are so frequently repeated, by *all* the Apostles to *all* classes of society, that their having become Christians was the very reason why all their lawful obligations should be the more scrupulously discharged.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul preach the same doctrine, but most judiciously apply their injunctions to the different modes of government under which their several converts lived. Saint Peter, who wrote *to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Asia,* &c. where the governments were arbitrary, orders them *first to obey the king as supreme.*—Saint Paul, addressing the people of Rome, where it is well known the Emperor and the senate did not always act in concurrence, with his usual exquisite prudence makes choice of an ambiguous expression, *the higher powers,* without specifically determining what those powers were.

Loyalty is a cheap quality, where a good government makes a happy people. It is then an obligation, without being a virtue. That every man should be obedient to the existing powers, is a very easy injunction to us, who are

living under the mildest government, and the most virtuous King. When Saint Paul enjoined his beloved disciple "to put the people in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates" — had the Episcopal Titus been acting under the merciful government of the Imperial Titus, Saint Paul might have been denied any merit in giving this authoritative mandate, or the Bishop in obeying it; it might have been urged, that the injunctions were accommodated to a sovereign whose commands it would be unreasonable to dispute.

The submission which Saint Paul practised and taught was a trial of a higher order, but though hard, it was not too hard for his principles. To enjoin and to practise implicit obedience, where Nero was the supreme authority, furnished him with a fair occasion for exhibiting his sincerity on this point. Never let it be forgotten, for the honour of Christianity, and of the Apostle who published it, that Saint Paul chose to address his precepts of civil obedience to the Christians at Rome, under the most tyrannical of all their tyrants. He commands them to *submit for conscience-sake*, to a sovereign, who, — their enemy, Tacitus, gives the relation — made the martyrdom of the Christians his personal diversion; who burnt them alive by night in the streets, that the flames

might light him to the scene of his licentious pleasures.

In the first three centuries, till the Roman government became Christian, there is not, we believe, an instance upon record, of any insurrection against legitimate authority. Tertullian, in his "Apology," challenges the Pagans to produce a single instance of sedition, in which any of the Christians had been concerned; though their numbers were become so great, as to have made their opposition formidable, while the well-known cruel and vengeful principle of their oppressors would have rendered it desperate. Even that philosophical politician, Montesquieu, acknowledged, that in those countries where Christianity had even imperfectly taken root, rebellions have been less frequent than in other places.

Nor did Saint Paul indemnify himself for his public submission, by privately vilifying the lawful tyrant: the Emperor is not only not named, but is not pointed at. There is not one of those sly inuendoes, which the artful subverters of states know how to employ, when they would undermine the stability of law without incurring its penalty. He betrays no symptom of an exasperating spirit, lurking behind the shelter of prudence, and the screen of legal security.

It is observable, that in the very short period, from the origin of Christianity under Augustus

to the time at which Saint Paul wrote, there were four successive Roman Emperors, each of whom was worse than the preceding, as if it had been providentially so determined, as a test of the meek and quiet spirit of Christianity, whose followers never manifested resistance to any of these oppressive masters.

Saint Paul knew how to unite a respect for the government with a just abhorrence of the vices of the governor. We are not advocating the cause of passive obedience — but it may be fairly observed, in this connection, that political passions are so apt to inflame the whole mind, that it is dangerous for those who are professionally devoted to the service of religion to be powerfully influenced by them.

I believe there has been no government under which Christianity has not been able to subsist. When the ruling powers were lenient to it, and especially when they afforded it protection, it has advanced in secular prosperity and external grandeur; when they have been intolerant, its spirit has received a fresh internal impulse; it has improved in spiritual vigour, as if it had considered oppression only as a new scene for calling new graces into exercise.

With the specific nature of the populace, in all countries, Saint Paul was well acquainted. He knew that till religion has operated on their hearts, they have but one character. Of this character we have many correct, though slight

sketches, in the New Testament. Now we hear the stupid clamour of the Ephesian idolaters vociferating, for two hours, their one idea in their one phrase. * Then we see that picture of a mob, so exactly alike in all ages, from the uproar in the streets of Ephesus to the riots in the streets of Westminster; "the greater part knew not wherefore they were come together." On another occasion, "the certainty could not be known for the tumult." Then their mutable caprice, changing with the impulse of the event, or of the moment. When the viper fastened on Paul's hand, "he was a murderer," when he shook it off unhurt, "he was a God." † At Lystra the same people who had offered him divine honours, no sooner heard the false reports of the Jews from Antioch, than *they stoned him, and dragged him out of the city as a dead man.* ‡ It was the very spirit which dictated the "Hosanna" of one day, and the "crucify him" of the next.

Saint Paul well knew these wayward motions of the mob. He knew also that, without the faculty of thinking, their gregarious habit gave them a physical force, which was a substitute for rational strength; and that this instinctive and headlong following the herd, without reason, without consistency, makes them as formidable by their aggregate number, as they are

* Acts, xix. † Acts, xxviii. ‡ Acts, xiv.

inconsiderable by their individual weight. Yet, did he ever attempt to turn the knowledge, in which he was so well versed, to a political purpose? Did he ever cajole the multitude, as an engine to lift himself into power or popularity? Did he consider them, as some designing orators have done, the lowest round in ambition's ladder, by which, its foot fixed in the dirt, they strive to scale the summit of public favour; alluring by flattery beings whom they despise, and paying them by promises which they know they shall never be able to keep?

Saint Paul's love of order is an additional proof of the soundness of his political character. He uses his influence with the vulgar, only to lead them to obedience. Nor did he content himself with verbal instructions to obey; he seconded them by a method the most practically efficient. Together with order itself, he enjoined on the people those industrious habits which are the very soul of order. He was a most rigorous punisher of idleness, that powerful cherisher of insubordination in the lower orders. Not to eat was the penalty he inflicted on those who would not work. He commands his Thessalonian converts to "correct the disorderly" — again enjoining, that "with quietness they work and eat their own bread." — "Stirrers up of the people" never command them to work; and though they promise them bread, knowing they shall never be able to give it to them, yet they

do not, like Saint Paul, command them to eat it in peace. By thus encouraging peaceable and laborious habits, he was at once insuring the comforts of the people, and the security of the state. Are these exhortations, is this conduct, any proof of that tendency to faction, which has been so often charged on the religion of Jesus?

In his political discretion, as well as in all other points, Saint Paul imitates his Lord. Jesus in the earlier part of his ministry was extremely cautious of declaring who he was, never but once owning himself to be the Messiah. When at last, knowing "that his hour was come*," he scrupled not to express his resentment publicly against the Sanhedrim, by almost the only strong expression of indignation which Infinite Wisdom, clothed in Infinite Meekness, ever thought fit to use; even then he said nothing against the civil governor.

But while Saint Paul thus proved himself a firm supporter of established authorities, as such, he would not connive at any formal act of injustice; while he resigned himself to the Roman powers, his lawful judges, he would not submit to be condemned illegally by the Jews. When he appealed to Cæsar, he declared, with a dignified firmness becoming his character, that though he refused not to die, he would be tried by the rightful judicature.

* John, xiii. 1.

If it be objected, that, in a single instance, he sharply rebuked Ananias for violating the law, by commanding him to be punished unjustly; he immediately cleared himself from the charge of contumacy, by declaring, "he knew not that it was the High Priest; and instantly took occasion to extract a maxim of obedience from his own error; and, to render it more impressive, sanctioned it by scriptural authority. "*It is written* thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." *

It must have been obvious to his Pagan judges, that he never interfered with their rights, or even animadverted on their corruptions. His real crime in their eyes, was, not his intermeddling with government, but his converting the people. It was by exposing the impositions of their mercenary priests, by declaring *their idols ought not to be worshipped*, that he inflamed the magistrates; and they were irritated, not so much as civil governors, as guardians of their religion. He knew the consequences of his persevering fidelity, and, like a true servant of the true God, never shrunk from them.

To complete the character of his respect to authorities, he sanctifies loyalty, by connecting it with piety. He expressly exhorts the new Bishop of the Ephesians †, that throughout his episcopal jurisdiction "prayers, intercession,

* Acts, xiii. † Timothy.

and giving of thanks be made for kings, and all in authority; — and adds, as a natural consequence of the obligation arising from the reciprocal connection, "that subjects may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." There could not have been devised a more probable method of insuring allegiance; for would it not be preposterous to injure or vilify those, for whom we make it a conscience to pray?

Yet even this important duty may be overestimated, when men's submission to kings is considered as paramount to their duty to "another king, one Jesus." * An instance of this we have seen exemplified in our own time, though it has pleased Almighty Goodness to over-rule it to the happiest results. And among the triumphs of religion which we have witnessed, it is not the least considerable, that, whereas Christianity was originally charged with a design to overturn states and empires, *we* have seen the crime completely turned over to the accusers; *we* have seen the avowed adversaries of Christ become the strenuous subverters of order, law, and government.

To name only one of the confederated band: — Voltaire had reached the pinnacle of literary fame and general admiration, not, it is to be hoped, *for* his impiety, but *in spite* of it. The

* Acts, vii.

fearful consequences of his audacious blasphemies were hid behind those graces of style, that gay wit, those fascinating pleasantries, that sharp yet bitter raillery, which, if they did not conceal the turpitude, decorated it, and obtained for his profaneness, something more than pardon. His boldness increased with his impunity. He carried it with a high hand, against the whole scheme of Revelation; substituting ridicule for argument, and assertion for fact; and then reasoning from his own misrepresentations, as consequentially as if he had found the circumstances he invented.

But the missile arrows of his lighter pieces, barbed, pointed, and envenomed (the exact characters of that slender weapon), proved the most destructive in his warfare upon Christianity; and he could replenish his exhaustless quiver with the same unparalleled celerity with which emptied it. The keen sagacity of his mind taught him, that witty wickedness is of all the most successful. Argumentative impiety hurts but few, and generally those who were hurt before. Besides, it requires in the reader a talent, or at least a taste, congenial with the writer; in this idle age it requires also the rare quality of patient investigation; a quality not to be generally expected, when our reading is become almost as dissipated as our pleasures, and as frivolous as our conversation.

For though Voltaire contrived to make every

department of literature the medium of corruption; though the most unpromising and least suspected vehicles were pressed into the service to assist his ruling purpose; yet historical falsehoods might be refuted by adverting to purer sources; unfair citations might be contradicted by referring to the originals. The popular engine of mischief is not the art of reasoning, but the art of raillery. The danger lies not in the attempt to prove a thing to be false, so much as in the talent which aims to make what is true ridiculous; not so much in attacking, as in misstating; not in inventing, but in discolouring.

Metaphysical mischief is tedious to the trifling, and dull to the lively. Who now reads the "Leviathan?" Who has *not* read Candide? "Political Justice," a more recent work, subversive of all religious and social order, was too ponderous to be popular, and too dry to answer the end of general corruption. But when the substance, by that chemical process well known to the preparers of poison, was *rubbed down* into an amusing novel, then it began to operate; the vehicle, though it made the potion pleasant, did not lessen its deleterious quality.

In Voltaire, a sentiment that cut up hope by the roots was compressed into a phrase as short as the motto of a ring, and as sparkling as the brilliants which encompass it. Every one can repeat an epigram, and even they who cannot understand, can circulate it. The fashionable

laughed before they had time to think; the dread of not being supposed to have read what all were reading, stimulated those who read, in order that they might talk. Little wits came to sharpen their weapons at the forge of this Philistine, or to steal small arms from his arsenal.

The writer of these pages has not forgotten the time when it was a sort of modish competition who could first produce proof that they had received the newest pamphlet from Ferney, by quoting from it; and they were gratified to find that the attributes of intelligence and good taste were appended to their gay studies. Others indulged, with a sort of fearful delight, in the perilous pleasure. Even those who could not read without indignation, did not wait without impatience. Each successive work, like the book in the Apocalypse, was "so sweet in the mouth," that they forgot to anticipate the bitterness of the digestion. Or, to borrow a more awful illustration from the same Divine source, "A star fell from heaven on the waters, burning like a lamp, and the star was called Wormwood; and many died of the waters, because they were made bitter." That bright genius, which might have illuminated the world, became a destructive flame, and, like the burning brand thrown by the Roman soldier into the Temple of Jerusalem, carried conflagration into the sanctuary.

At length, happily for rescuing the principles, but most injuriously for the peace and safety of

society, the polished courtier became a furious anarchist. The idol of monarchical France, the equalised associate of the Royal Author of Berlin, changed his political note: the parasite of princes, and the despot of literature, sounded the trumpet of Jacobinism. The political and moral world shook to their foundation. Earth below trembled. Heaven above threatened. All was insecurity. Order seemed reverting to original chaos. The alarm was given. Britain first awoke, roused by the warning voice of Burke. Enthusiasm was converted into detestation. The horror which ought to have been excited by his impiety was reserved for his democracy. But it was found that he could not subvert thrones with the same impunity with which he had laboured to demolish altars. He gave, indeed, the same impulse to sedition, which he had long given to infidelity, and by his own activity increased the velocity of both. The public feeling was all alive, and his political principles justly brought on his name that reprobation which had been long due to his blasphemies, but which his blasphemies had failed to excite.

Divine Providence seems to have spared him to extreme old age, that by adding one crime more to his long catalogue, his political outrages might counteract his moral mischiefs. But his wisdom seems to have been equally short-sighted in both his projects. While the consequences of his designs against the governments

of the world probably outran his intentions, his scheme for the extinction of Christianity, and for the obliteration of the very name of its Author, fell short of it.* Peace, law, and order are restored to the desolated nations. Kings are reinstated in their rightful thrones, and many of the subjects of the King of kings, it is hoped, are returned to their allegiance.

The abilities of this powerful but pernicious genius were not more extraordinary than their headlong yet diversified course. His talents took their bent from the turn of the age in which he was cast. His genius was his own, but its determination was given from without. He gave impressions as forcibly, as he yielded to them suddenly. It was action and reaction. He lighted on the period in which, of all others, he was born to produce the most powerful sensation. The public temper was agitated; he helped on the crisis. Revolt was ripening; he matured it. Circumstances suggested his theories; his theories influenced circumstances. He was inebriated with flattery, and mad with success; but his delirious vanity defeated its own ends; in his greediness for instant adoration he neglected to take future fame into his bold but brief account; —

> "Vaulting ambition overleap'd itself,
> And fell on t'other side."

* It was literally a repetition of what Tertullian says of the persecution of Nero, it was *nominis Prælium.*

CHAP. XVII.

SAINT PAUL'S ATTENTION TO INFERIOR CONCERNS.

It is one great advantage of epistolary writing, that it is not subject to the general laws of composition, but admits of every diversity of miscellaneous matter. Topics which might be thought beneath the dignity of a Treatise, or inconsistent with the solemnity of a Sermon, or the gravity of a Dissertation, find their proper place in a letter. Details which are not of the first importance, may yet be of such a nature as to require notice or animadversion.

The epistolary form has also other advantages; it not only admits of a variety of subjects, but of the most abrupt transition from one subject to another, however dissimilar. *It* requires not the connecting links of argumentative composition, nor the regularity of historical, nor the uniformity of ethical; nor the method and arrangement of each and of all these. The free mind, unfettered by critical rules, expatiates at will, soars or sinks, skims or dives, as the objects of its attention may be elevated or depressed, profound or superficial.

Of the character of this species of writing, the authors of the Epistles of the New Testa-

ment have most judiciously availed themselves. Saint Paul, especially, has taken all due advantage of the latitude it allows. His Epistles, though they contain the most profound reasoning, and on the most important subjects on which the mind of man can be engaged, are not, exclusively, regular discussions of any set topics; though they breathe strains of devotion almost angelic, yet do they also frequently stoop to the concerns of ordinary life; partaking, as occasion requires, of all that familiarity, versatility, and ease, which this species of writing authorises. Yet though occasional topics and incidental circumstances are introduced, each Epistle has some particular drift, tends to some determined point, and, amidst frequent digressions, still maintains a consistency with itself, as well as with the general tendency of Scripture. The method being sometimes concealed, and the chain of argument not obvious, the closest attention is required, and the reader, while he may be gathering much solid instruction, reproof, or consolation from scattered sentences, and independent axioms, will not, without much application of mind, embrace the general argument.

Amidst, however, all the higher parts of spiritual instruction; amidst all the solidity of deep practical admonition, there is not, perhaps, a single instance in which this author has omitted to inculcate any one of the little morals, any

one even of what may be called those minor circumstances, which constitute the decorums and decencies of life. Nor does his zeal for promoting the greatest actions ever make him unmindful of the grace, the propriety, the manner with which they are to be performed.

It is one of the characteristic properties of a great mind, that it can "contract, as well as dilate itself;" and we have it from one of the highest human authorities, that the mind which cannot do both, is not great in its full extent. * The minuter shades of character do not of themselves make up a valuable person; they may be possessed in perfection, separate from great excellence. But as that would be a feeble mind, which should be composed of inferior qualities only, so that would be an imperfect one, in which they were wanting. To all the strong lines of character, Saint Paul added the lighter touches, the graceful filling up which finish the portrait.

But in a character which forcibly exhibits all the great features of Christianity, these subordinate properties do not only make up its completeness, they give also an additional evidence of the truth and perfection of a religion which makes such a provision for virtue, as to determine that nothing which is right, however inconsiderable, can be indifferent. The attention to

* Lord Bacon.

inferior duties is a symptom of a mind not satisfied with its attainments, not so full of itself, as to fancy that it can *afford* to be negligent; it is indicative of a mind humble enough to be watchful, because it is suspicious of itself; of a conscience ever on its guard, that its infirmities may not grow into vices, nor its occasional neglects into allowed omissions. But it is chiefly anxious, that its imperfections may not be brought as a charge against religion itself; for may not its enemies say, if he is neglectful of small and easy duties, which cost little, is it probable that he will be at much pains about such as are laborious and difficult? Saint Paul never leaves an opening for this censure. He always seems to have thought small avenues worth guarding, small kindnesses worth performing, small negligences worth avoiding: and his constant practical creed is, that nothing that is a sin is small; that nothing that is right is insignificant. But Saint Paul was an accurate master of moral proportion. He took an exact measure of the positive and relative value of things. If he did not treat smaller objects as great ones, if he did not lift proprieties into principles, he by no means overlooked them; he never wholly neglected them. He graduated the whole scale of doctrine and of action, of business and of opinion, assigning to every thing its place according to its worth.

Though he did not think the dissension in

religious opinions between two individuals, Euodias and Syntyche *, of as much importance as the contentions and schisms in the church of the Corinthians, yet he thought it of sufficient importance to be healed; and anxiously desired to reconcile them to "make them of one mind in the Lord." He knew that disunion is not only unfavourable to the piety of the persons at variance, but that, while it gratifies the enemies, it injures the cause of religion.

But if he gives their due importance to inferior though necessary duties, he draws a still nicer line in regard to matters in themselves indifferent. The eaters of herbs and the eaters of flesh are alike, in his estimation, as to the act; but when the indulgence in the latter becomes a temptation to an undecided believer, then, even this trifling concession was no longer a matter of indifference. It became then a just ground for the exercise of self-denial, which perhaps he was not sorry to have the opportunity of enforcing.

He knew that there were persons who profess to have made a great proficiency in piety, who are not defective in point of cheap attainment, but *are* defective in the more difficult attainments which involve self-denial; persons who, though very spiritual in their conversation, are somewhat selfish in their habits; who talk

* Philippians, iv.

much of faith, and yet decline the smallest sacrifice of ease; who profess to do all for Christ, but do little for his poor members. He wished to see a high profession always accompanied with a corresponding practice. The Israelites, who were so forward to exclaim, "All that the Lord hath commanded us we will do," went — and made them a golden calf.

In the mind of our Apostle, all is consistent. He that said, "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus," said also, *Let all things be done decently and in order.* Right things must be done in a right manner. This simple precept indicates the soberness of Saint Paul's mind. An enthusiast has seldom much dislike to disorderly conduct; on the contrary, he has generally a sovereign contempt for small points, indeed for every thing which does not exclusively tend to advance the one object, whatever that may be, which is nearest his heart.

Saint Paul sometimes appends small objects to great ones, thus increasing their importance by their position. Immediately after giving his exquisite portrait of charity *, he goes at once to recommend and enforce, by powerful illustrations, certain proprieties of behaviour in the public congregations. Knowing the readiness of the world to catch at the slightest irregularity

* 1 Cor. xiii. and xiv.

in religious professors, he puts them on their guard "not to let their good be evil spoken of;" but wishes that they might acquit themselves unexceptionably as to manner, in things which were already right as to the matter.

From the high duties of Episcopal dignity, he stoops to the concerns of individuals of the most degraded condition. From the most important points of moral action in women, he descends to the very minutiæ of their apparel. This indicates how well aware he was, that every appearance of impropriety in personal adornment is an implication of a wrong state of mind. If this seemingly inferior concern was not judged to be beneath the notice of an inspired Apostle, surely it ought not to be unworthy the regard of my fair country-women.

One might have suspected, in the case of Saint Paul, that the heavy load of cares, and sorrows, and persecutions; with the addition of ecclesiastical affairs, the most extensive and the most complicated, might have excused him from attending minutely to an object so inconsiderable, as the concerns of a poor runaway slave, "the son of his bonds."

Yet this once guilty, but now penitent servant, he condescends to make the exclusive subject of a letter to his late master.* This application to Philemon, in behalf of Onesimus,

* Epistle to Philemon.

is a model in its kind; sincere, polite, tenderly affectionate to the convicted offender; strong, yet respectfully kind to his friend. In point of elegance and delicacy, in every excellence of composition, it may vie with any epistle of antiquity; and is certainly far superior, in ingenuity, feeling, warmth, and argument, to the admired letter of Pliny, in recommendation of his friend Arrianus Maturius.

There are people who sometimes forgive the piety of a man, in consideration of his influence, his reputation, his talents, or some other agreeable quality connected with it. Genius is accepted by the world as a sort of atonement for religion, and wit has been known to obtain the forgiveness of the gay, for the strict principles of the grave. *Here* is a striking instance of two persons, connected by the closest ties of Christian friendship, who acted on other grounds: Philemon was not ashamed of his pious friend Paul, though a prisoner; nor was Paul ashamed of Onesimus, though a servant.

In urging his request on his friend, the Apostle does not adopt the corrupt practice of too many, who, in order to put the person addressed in good humour, preface their petition by flattering him on some point, where, perhaps, he least deserves it. Saint Paul, notwithstanding he would have reprobated such insincerity, yet thought it fair to remind Philemon of his high principles, thus indirectly to furnish him

with a standard to which he expected his friend would act up.

He then proceeds to press his suit, with all the variety of argument and persuasion of which he was so great a master. His earnestness of entreaty, for so inconsiderable an object, conveys a lesson to ministers and to heads of families, that there is no human being so low as to be beneath their kindness; no offender so great as to be beyond their hope.

He had opened his request with a motive the most calculated to touch the heart of a Christian friend—*that he always made mention of him in his prayers.* This tender plea he follows up with the affectionate commendation of his Christian virtue, that the friend he was beseeching *abounded in love and faith*, not only "to the Lord Jesus, *but to all saints.*"

After this soothing address, he urges his claims to the boon he was about to ask; in doing which, though he had been always mindful of the dignity of his apostleship, he chose rather to sink this consideration in the more tender pleas of affection to his friend, and the distressed state of the person for whom he petitioned. "Paul the aged, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ," were touching and powerful motives; but what was likely to penetrate a generous mind was, that the aged and imprisoned Paul, in sending back the penitent servant to his own master, and depriving himself of his

attendance, was at once performing an act of justice and of self-denial. He would not detain him from his rightful owner, though he was so great a comfort to himself in his forlorn confinement. It was also a fine occasion of pressing on Onesimus, that the return to his duty would be the surest evidence of his conversion.

Thus anxiously for an offending slave does he seem to touch every spring of pity in the heart of his friend. Who would imagine that the man, who thus labours the cause of so obscure an individual, had the superintendence of all the Christian churches in the world?

But with Saint Paul rectitude is always the prevailing principle. His zeal for his convert never makes him lose sight of the duty of restitution. Destitute, and a prisoner himself, he offers to make good the loss which Philemon might have sustained by his servant's misconduct. He candidly reminds him, however, how much the spiritual obligations of Philemon, his convert also, exceeded in value the debt due to him from Onesimus; though he refuses to avail himself of the plea. Thy servant, perhaps, owes thee a paltry sum of money — *thou owest me thine own self.*

With his characteristic disinterestedness, he not only thus pathetically pleads for him who was to receive the good, but for him who was to do it; as if he had said — Give me ground to rejoice in this evidence of thy Christian benevo-

lence. He farther stimulates him to this act of charity, by declaring the *confidence he had in his obedience;* thus encouraging him to the duty, by intimating the certainty of his compliance. An additional lesson is given to religious professors, not only that their being Christians includes their being charitable, but that no act of charity should infringe on the rights of justice.

We conclude, by remarking on the union of judgment and kindness in Saint Paul's conduct respecting Onesimus. He sends him back to Philemon at Colosse, as a proof, on the part of Onesimus, of penitent humility, and on the part of Paul, of impartial equity. At the same time he more than takes away his disgrace, by honouring him with the office in conjunction with Tychicus, of being the bearer of his public Epistle to the Colossian church. He confers on him the farther honour of naming him, in the body of his Epistle, as *a faithful and beloved brother.*

How different is this modest and rational report by an inspired Apostle, of a penitent criminal, a convert of his own; one who had survived his crimes long enough to prove the sincerity of his repentance by the reformation of his life; — how different is this sober narrative by a writer who considered restitution as a part of repentance, and humility as an evidence of faith, from those too sanguine reports which are now so frequently issuing from the press, of the

conversion of criminals brought to execution for violating all the laws of God and man!

The Gospel presents us but with one such instance; an instance which is too often pressed into a service where it has nothing to do; yet we far more frequently see the example of the penitent thief on the cross brought forward as an encouragement to those who have been notorious offenders, than that of Onesimus; though the latter is of general application, and the former is inapplicable to criminals in a Christian country; for the dying malefactor embraced Christianity the moment it was presented to him. This solitary instance, however, no more offers a justification, than an example, of fanatical fervors; for if it exhibits a lively faith, it exhibits also deep penitence, humility, and self-condemnation. Nor does the just confidence of the expiring criminal in the Redeemer's power swell him into that bloated assurance of which we hear in some late converts.

For, in the tracts to which we allude, we hear not only of one, but of many, holy highwaymen, triumphant malefactors, joyful murderers. True, indeed, it is, that good men on earth rejoice with the angels in heaven over even one sinner that repenteth. We would hope many of these were penitents; but as there was no space granted, as in the case of Onesimus, to prove their sincerity, we should be glad to see, in these statements, more con-

trition and less rapture. May not young delinquents be encouraged to go on from crime to crime, feeling themselves secure of heaven at last, when they see, from this incautious charity, that assurance of acceptance which is so frequently withheld from the close of a life of persevering holiness, granted to the most hardened perpetrators of the most atrocious crimes?

As it has been observed, that the baskets of the hawkers have *this year* abounded in these dangerous, though, doubtless, well-meant tracts, may not the lower class in general, and our servants in particular, be encouraged to look for a happy termination of life, not so much to the dying bed of the exemplary Christian, as to the annals of the gallows? A few exceptions might be mentioned, honourable to the prudence, as well as to the piety, of the writers of some of these little narratives.

CHAP. XVIII.

SAINT PAUL ON THE RESURRECTION.

BEFORE the introduction of Christianity, so dark were the notices of a state beyond the grave, that it is no wonder if men were little inclined to give up the pleasures and interests of one world, of which they were in actual possession, for the possibility of another, doubtful at best, and too indistinct for hope, too uncertain for comfort.

If a state of future happiness was believed, or rather guessed at, by a few of those who had not the light of Revelation, no nation on earth believed it, no public religion in the world taught it. This single truth, then, firmly established, not only by the preaching of Jesus, but by his actual resurrection from the dead, produced a total revolution in the condition of man. It gave a new impulse to his conduct, it infused a new vitality into his existence. Faith became to man an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. This anchorage enables him to ride out the blackest storms; and though he must still work out his passage, the haven is near, and the deliverance certain, "while he keeps his eye to the star, and his hand to the stern."

The value and importance, then, of this doctrine, seems to have made it an especial object of Divine care. Founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, perhaps it may have afforded one reason, why the long-suffering of God permitted Jerusalem to stand near half a century after this last event had taken place. By this delay, not only the inhabitants of that city, but the multitudes who annually resorted thither, could gain full leisure to examine into its truth: had the destruction followed immediately upon the crime which caused it, occasion might have been furnished to the Rabbies for asserting, that a truth could not now be authenticated which was buried in the ruins of the city. Nor would the enemies of Jesus have scrupled any subornation to discredit his pretensions, even though at the expense of a doctrine which involved the happiness of worlds unborn.

Jerusalem, however, survived for a time, and the doctrine of a resurrection was established for ever. And now, had it been a doctrine of any ordinary import, as Saint Paul was not writing to persons ignorant of the truths of Christianity, but to Christian converts, it might have been less his object to propound it dogmatically, than to develope and expand it, being a thing previously known, acknowledged, and received. In writing a letter, when we allude to facts already notorious, we do not

think our notices the less acceptable, because we do not repeat intelligence already popular; while we content ourselves with drawing inferences from it, making observations upon it, or allusions to it. The reader having the same object in view with the writer, would catch at intimations, seize on allusions, and fill up the implied meaning.

Such, however, was not Saint Paul's conduct with respect to this doctrine. There were, indeed, it should seem, among his converts, many sceptical Jews infected with the philosophising spirit of the Grecian schools, and who doubted, what these last derided, the resurrection of the dead. Consequently, upon every account, Saint Paul is found to give it a peculiar prominence, and on all occasions to bestow upon it more argument and illustration than on most other tenets of the new faith.

There is no profession, no class of men, whether Jew or Gentile, before whom Saint Paul was not ready to be examined on this subject, and was not prompt to give the most decided testimony. Uniformly he felt the strength of evidence on his side; uniformly he appealed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as to a fact established on the most solid basis, — a fact, not first propagated in distant countries, where the facility of imposition would have been greater; not at a distant period of time, when the same objection against it might have been

made, but on the very spot where it occurred, at the very moment of its occurrence.

In his writings, also, the same confidence, the same urgency appears. He always adverts to this tenet, as to the main hinge on which the whole of Christianity turns. The more reasoning oppugners of the faith thought that if this doctrine could be got rid of, either by argument or ridicule, it would subvert the whole fabric of Christianity. It was, in reality, the only *sensible* proof that could be adduced of the immortality of the soul, an opinion which, indeed, many of them professed to entertain, though they would not be indebted to this doctrine for its proof. The more, however, they oppugned, the more he withstood; and of so high importance did he represent it, that he even makes "believing in the heart that God hath raised Jesus from the dead" to be a principal condition of salvation.

We must not judge the inspired Saint Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the same canons of criticism by which we pronounce judgment on other writers. Notwithstanding the elevation of his genius, his hand was in a great measure held, by the nature of his subject and of his character, from the display of his talents as an author. From the warmth of his feelings, and the energy of his mind, we infer, that he possessed an imagination peculiarly bright. That he subdued, instead of indulging, this faculty,

adds worth to his character, dignity to his writing, and confirmation to the truth.

To suppress the exercise of a powerful imagination is one sacrifice more, which a pious writer makes to God. Independently of that inspiration which guided him, his severe judgment would show him, that the topics of which he treated were of too high and holy a nature to admit the indulgence of a faculty rather calculated to excite admiration than to convey instruction.

In considering his general style of composition, we are not to look after the choice of words, so much as to the mind, and spirit, and character of the writer. If, however, we ventured to select any one part of Saint Paul's writings, to serve as an exception to this remark, and to exhibit a more splendid combination of excellencies, than almost any other in his whole works, we should adduce the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he fully propounds the article in question. As our Lord's discourse, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, is the only explicit description of the last judgment, and Saint John's vision, at the close of the Apocalypse, the only distinct view given us of the heavenly glory, so this is the only graphical representation which Scripture has presented to us of this most important and consolatory doctrine, the resurrection of the dead.

The subject of this fifteenth chapter is quite distinct from that which precedes or follows it; it is interposed between matter quite irrelevant to it, forming a complete episode. As a composition, it stands unrivalled for the unspeakable importance of its matter, its deep reasoning, and lofty imagery. Saint Paul sometimes leaves it to others to beat out his massy thoughts into all the expansion of which they are so susceptible; his eloquence, indeed, usually consists more in the grandeur of the sentiment than in the splendour of the language. Here both are equally conspicuous. Here his genius breaks out in its full force; here his mind lights upon a subject which calls out all his powers; and the subject finds a writer worthy of itself. It furnishes a succession of almost every object that is grand in the visible and the invisible world. A description becomes a picture; an expostulation assumes the regularity of a syllogism; an idea takes the form of an image; the writer seems to be the spectator; the relater speaks as one admitted within the veil.

According to his usual practice of appealing to facts, as a substratum on which to build his reasoning, he produces a regular statement, in their order of succession, of the different times at which Jesus appeared after his death, authenticated by the unimpeachable evidence of the disciples themselves, by whom he was seen individually, as well as in great bodies. This

evidence he corroborates by his own personal testimony at his conversion; an evidence which he produces with sentiments of the deepest self-abasement.

So important, he proceeds, was it to settle the belief of this doctrine, that if it were not true, all their hopes fell to the ground. To insist on this grand peculiarity of the Gospel was establishing the truth of the whole by a part. It was the consummation of the validity of the mission of Christ. Without this finishing circumstance, what proof could his followers adduce, that his atonement was accepted; that his mediation was ascertained; that his intercession would be available; that his final judgment would take place; that because He was risen, they should rise also? It was not one thing, it was every thing. It was putting the seal to a testament, which, without it, would not have been authentic. It involved a whole train of the most awful consequences. Such a chain of inferences would be destroyed by this broken link, as nothing could repair. In short, it amounted to this tremendous conclusion: "Those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." You who live in the hope of the redemption wrought for you "are yet in your sins." If Jesus remains under the power of death, how shall we be delivered from the power of sin? If the doctrine be false, then is my preaching a delusion, and your faith a nul-

lity. He adds, that they who now were the happiest of men in their assured hope of eternal life, would become, "of all men most miserable;" in short, as in another place he asks to what purpose has Christ died for our sins, if he has not "risen for our justification?"

The Apostle having shown himself a consummate master of the art of reasoning, by his refutation of the absurdities that would follow an assumption that Christ was not risen; and having cleared the ground from most of the objections and difficulties which had been thrown in his way, proceeds to the positive assertion, that not only Christ is risen, but that all his faithful followers have their own resurrection ascertained by his. He illustrates this truth by an apposite allusion to the custom of a Jewish harvest, the whole of which was sanctified by the consecration of the first-fruits.

In his distinguishing characteristics of the different properties of the body of man, in its different states of existence, every antithesis is exact. The body that is sown in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, is raised in incorruption, glory, and power. The material body is become spiritual. "The first man was made a living soul," possessing that natural life communicated by him to all his posterity; but Christ was a quickening spirit, through whom, as from its source, spiritual life is conveyed to all believers.

If Saint Paul uniformly makes every doctrine a fountain flowing with practical uses, it is no wonder that he should make this triumphant consummation of all doctrine subservient to the great ends of holiness. For it is worthy of remark, that in this very place, with all the interest which his argument excites — in all the heat which his defence kindles, — carried away, as he seems to be, by his faith and his feelings, — yet, in his usual manner, he checks his career to introduce moral maxims, to insinuate holy cautions. Not contented to guard the people against the danger of corrupt and corrupting society upon his own principles, he strengthens his argument, by referring them to a Pagan poet, whose authority, with some at least, he might think would be more respected than his own, on the infection of "evil communications." He suggests ironically, as a practical effect of the disbelief of this truth, the propriety of Epicurean voluptuousness, and even ventures to recommend the utmost indulgence of present enjoyment, upon the supposition of a death which is to cut off all future hope, and all posthumous responsibility.

Then assuming a loftier note, with an awfully warning voice, he proceeds to this solemn adjuration — "Awake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God." As if he had said, —If you give in to this incredulity, your practice will become consonant to

your belief. Every man will defend his error when it favours his vice. Your evil habits will complete the corruption of your faith. If you find an interest in indulging your mistake, your next step will be to think it true. What is first a wish, will gradually become an opinion; an opinion will as naturally become a ground of action; and what you now permit yourself to do, you will soon become willing to justify.

He produces, as the strongest proof of his belief in the doctrine in question, the complacency of Christians in suffering. Why did others press forwards to martyrdom? — Why did he himself expose his life to perpetual peril? — Why, but from the firm persuasion, that as Christ was risen, they should rise also. Would not their voluntary trials be absurd? — Would it not be madness to embrace, when it was in their power to avoid, all the hardships which imbittered life, all the dangers which were likely to shorten it? He and his colleagues were not impassible substances, but feeling men, sensible to pain, keenly alive to suffering, with nerves as finely strung, with bodies as tenderly constituted, with souls as reluctant to misery as others. — Take away this grand motive for patience, rob them of this sustaining confidence, strip them of this glorious prospect, and their zeal would lose its character of virtue, their piety its claim to wisdom. Their perseverance would be fatuity. Mighty, then, must be their motive, powerful

indeed their assurance, clear and strong their conviction, that their brief sorrows were not worthy to be compared to the glories which were insured to them by the resurrection of Christ.

Again, he resumes the task of repelling the more plausible objections. But it is not our business to follow him through all his variety of illustration, all his diversified analogy, all his consecutive reasoning on the nature of the resurrection of the body. Resemblances the most distant, substances the most seemingly dissimilar in themselves, are yet brought together by a skill the most consummate, by an aptness the most convincing. All the objects of our senses, whatever is familiar to the sight or habitual to the mind, are put in requisition — all the analogies of nature are ransacked — the vegetable, the animal, the terrestrial and the celestial worlds, are brought into comparison; and the whole is made to demonstrate the truth of this awful doctrine. Such a cluster of images, all bearing upon one point, at once fill the mind, dilate the conception, and confirm the faith.

There is singular wisdom in the selection of these illustrations, not only as being the most apposite, but the most intelligible. They are not drawn from things abstruse or recondite, but from objects with which all classes are equally acquainted: — an incidental but not unimportant proof of the universal design of Christianity.

The most ordinary man is as conversant with the springing up and growth of corn, with the distinction between the flesh of the different animal species, as the philosopher. He can also as clearly discern the exterior distinction between the different luminaries of heaven as the astronomer. Here is no demand of knowledge, no appeal to science. Sight is the witness, sense the arbiter in this question.

To bestow immortality on mortals, and to revive the dead, had been pronounced by a heathen author to be beyond the reach of Divine power. To those bold Pyrrhonists, therefore, who might be among the Corinthians, and who sought to perplex the argument by asking — "How are the dead raised up?" — With what body do they come? he answers peremptorily, by referring them to the great resolver of difficulties — THE POWER OF GOD, inscribed in the book of daily experience — *God giveth it a body as it has pleased him.* He reminds them that this Divine power they perpetually saw exercised in a wonderful manner in the revolution of seasons, in the resuscitation of plants apparently dead; and in the springing up of corn, which dies first, in order that it may live. — To that omnipotence which could accomplish the one, could the other be difficult?

Who can pursue without emotion his rapid yet orderly transition from one portion of his subject to another. The interest still rising till

it closes in the triumphant climax of the final victory over the two last enemies, death and the grave! At length by a road, in which deviation does not impede his progress, he reaches the grand consummation. — Behold I show you a mystery — we shall not all sleep — but we shall be changed — in a moment — in the twinkling of an eye — at the last trumpet — for the trumpet shall sound — and the dead shall be raised incorruptible — and we shall all be changed. — It is almost profane to talk of beauties, where the theme is so transcendant; but this is one of the rare instances in which amplification adds to spirit, and velocity is not retarded by repetition. The rhythm adds to the effect, and soothes the mind, while the sentiment elevates it. The idea was not newly conceived in the Apostle's mind; he had before told the Thessalonians — "the Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an Archangel and the trump of God." His grateful spirit does not forget to remind them to whom the victory is owing, to whom the thanks are due.

In the solemn close, alighting again from the world of light, and life, and glory, he just touches upon earth to drop another brief but most impressive lesson — that though the victory is obtained, though the last conquest is achieved, though Christ is actually risen — all these ends accomplished, are not to dismiss us from diligence, but to stimulate us to it. They furnish

only an additional argument for "abounding in the work of the Lord."—It adds animation to the motive, that from this full exposition of the doctrine, they not only *believe*, but they *know* that their labour is not vain in the Lord.

With this glorious hope, what should arrest their progress? With such a reward in view — eternal life, the purchase of their risen Saviour, he at once provides them with the most effectual spur to diligence, with the only powerful support under the sorrows of life, with the only infallible antidote against the fear of death.

To conclude, this blessed Apostle never fails, where the subject is susceptible of consolation as well as of instruction, to deduce both from the same premises. What affectionate Christian will not here revert, with grateful joy, to the same writer's cheering address to the Saints of another church, who might labour under the pressing affliction of the death of pious friends?* He there offers a new instance, not only of his never-failing rule of applying the truths he preaches, but of their immediate application to the feelings of the individual. This it is which renders his writings so personally interesting. That the mourner over the pious dead might not "sorrow as those who have no hope," after the declaration that "Jesus died and rose again," he builds on this general principle the

* 1 Thessalonians, iv. 14.

particular assurance, " Even them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

What a balm to the breaking heart!—What! the loved companion of our youth, the friend of our age, the solace of our life, with whom we took sweet counsel, with whom we went to the house of God as friends, will Christ bring with him? Shall the bliss of our suspended intercourse be restored, unalloyed by the mutual infirmities which here rendered it imperfect, undiminished by the dread of another separation?

Well, then, might the angel say to Mary at the forsaken tomb, " Woman, why weepest thou?" Well might Jesus himself repeat the question, " Woman, why weepest thou?" Tears are wiped from all eyes. " The voice of joy and thanksgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous."—" The right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass." The resurrection of Christians is indissolubly involved in that of Christ: " because I live, ye shall live also." What are the splendid triumphs of earthly heroes to HIS triumph over the grave? What are the most signal victories over a world of enemies, to HIS victory over this last enemy? " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

CHAP. XIX.

SAINT PAUL ON PRAYER, THANKSGIVING, AND RELIGIOUS JOY.

PRAYER is an act which seems to be so prepared in the frame of our nature, to be so congenial to our dependent condition, so suited to our exigencies, so adapted to every man's known wants, and to his possibilities of wants unknown, so full of relief to the soul, and of peace to the mind, and of gladness to the heart, so productive of confidence in God, and so reciprocally proceeding from that confidence, that we should think, if he did not know the contrary, that it is a duty which scarcely required to be enjoined; — that he who had once found out his necessities, and that there was no other redress for them, would spontaneously have recourse as a delight, to what he had neglected as a command; that he who had once tasted the bounties of God, would think it a hardship not to be allowed to thank him for them; that the invitation to pray to his Benefactor was an additional proof of Divine goodness; that to be allowed to praise him for his mercies was itself a mercy.

The Apostle's precept, "pray always,"—pray evermore, pray without ceasing, men ought always to pray,—will not be criticised as a pleonasm, if we call to remembrance that there is no state of mind, no condition of life, in which prayer is not a necessity as well as an obligation. In danger, fear impels to it; in trouble, we have no other resource; in sickness, we have no other refuge; in dejection, no other hope; in death, no other comfort.

Saint Paul frequently shows the word *prayer* to be a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. He represents it to include our adoration of his perfections, our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, of our obligation for his benefits, providential and spiritual; of the avowal of our entire dependence on him, of our absolute subjection to him, the declaration of our faith in him, the expression of our devotedness to him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences; for succour in our distress; for a blessing on our undertakings; for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs.

If any should be disposed to think this general view too comprehensive, let him point out which of these particulars prayer does not embrace; which of these clauses a rational, a sen-

tient, an enlightened, a dependent being can omit in his scheme of devotion.

But as the multifarious concerns of human life will necessarily occasion a suspension of the exercise, Saint Paul, ever attentive to the principle of the act, and to the circumstances of the actor, reduces all these qualities to their essence, when he resolves them into *the spirit* of supplication.

To pray incessantly, therefore, appears to be, in his view of the subject, to keep the mind in an habitual disposition and propensity to devotion; for there is a sense in which we may be said to *do* that which we are *willing* to do, though there are intervals of the thought as well as intermissions of the act; — "as a traveller," says Dr. Barrow, "may be said to be still on his journey, though he stops to take needful rest, and to transact necessary business." If he pause, he does not turn out of the way; his pursuit is not diverted, though occasionally interrupted.

Constantly maintaining the disposition, then, and never neglecting the actual duty; never slighting the occasion which presents itself, nor violating the habit of stated devotion, may, we presume, be called "to pray without ceasing." The expression "watching unto prayer" implies this vigilance in finding, and this zeal in laying hold on these occasions.

The success of prayer, though promised to

all who offer it in perfect sincerity, is not so frequently promised to the cry of distress, to the impulse of fear, or the emergency of the moment, as to humble continuance in devotion; it is to patient waiting, to assiduous solicitation, to unwearied importunity, that God has declared that he will lend his ear, that he will give the communication of his Spirit, that he will grant the return of our requests. Nothing but this holy perseverance can keep up in our minds an humble sense of our dependence. It is not by a mere casual petition, however passionate, but by habitual application, that devout affections are excited and maintained, that our converse with heaven is carried on. It is by no other means that we can be assured, with Saint Paul, that "we are risen with Christ," but this obvious one, that we thus seek the things which are above; that the heart is renovated, that the mind is lifted above this low scene of things; that the spirit breathes in a purer atmosphere; that the whole man is enlightened, and strengthened, and purified; and that the more frequently, so the more nearly, he approaches to the throne of God. He will find also that prayer not only expresses but elicits the Divine grace.

Yet do we not allow every idle plea, every frivolous pretence to divert us from our better resolves? Business brings in its grave apology; pleasure, its bewitching excuse. But if we

would examine our hearts truly, and report them faithfully, we should find the fact to be, that disinclination to this employment, oftener than our engagement in any other, keeps us from this sacred intercourse with our Maker.

Under circumstances of distress, indeed, prayer is adopted with comparatively little reluctance; the mind which knows not where to fly, flies to God. In agony, Nature is no Atheist. The soul is drawn to God by a sort of natural impulse; not always, perhaps, by an emotion of piety, but from a feeling conviction, that every other refuge is "a refuge of lies." Oh! thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, happy if thou art either drawn or driven, with holy David, to say to thy God, "Thou art a place to hide me in."

But if it is easy for the sorrowing heart to give up a world, by whom itself seems to be given up, there are other demands for prayer equally imperative. There are circumstances more dangerous, yet less suspected of danger, in which, though the call is louder, it is less heard, because the voice of conscience is drowned by the clamours of the world. Prosperous fortunes, unbroken health, flattering friends, buoyant spirits, a spring-tide of success — these are the occasions when the very abundance of God's mercies is apt to fill the heart till it hardens it. Loaded with riches, crowned with dignities, successful in enterprise; beset with

snares in the shape of honours, with perils under the mask of pleasures; then it is that to the already saturated heart "to-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant," is more in unison than "What shall I render to the Lord?"

Men of business, especially men in power and public situations, are in no little danger of persuading themselves, that the affairs which occupy their time and mind being, as they really are, great and important duties, exonerate those who perform them from the necessity of the same strictness in devotion, which they allow to be right for men of leisure; and which, when they become men of leisure themselves, they are resolved to adopt: — but now is the accepted time, here is the accepted place, however they may be tempted to think that an exact attention to public duty, and an unimpeachable rectitude in discharging it, are substitutes for the offices of piety.

But these great and honourable persons are the very men to whom superior cares, and loftier duties, and higher responsibilities, render prayer even more necessary, were it possible, than to others. Nor does this duty trench upon other duties, for the compatibilities of prayer are universal. It is an exercise which has the property of incorporating itself with every other; not only not impeding but advancing it. If secular thoughts, and vain imaginations, often break in on our devout employments, let us allow Reli-

gion to vindicate her rights, by uniting herself with our worldly occupations. There is no crevice so small at which devotion may not slip in; no other instance of so rich a blessing being annexed to so easy a condition; no other case in which there is any certainty that to ask is to have. This the suitors to the great do not always find so easy from them, as the great themselves may find from God.

Not only the elevation on which they stand makes this fence necessary for their personal security, by enabling them to bear the height without giddiness, but the guidance of God's hand is so essential to the operations they conduct, that the public prosperity, no less than their own safety, is involved in the practice of habitual prayer. God will be more likely to bless the hand which steers, and the head which directs, when both are ruled by the heart which prays. Happily we need not look out of our own age or nation for instances of public men, who, while they govern the country, are themselves governed by a religious principle; who petition the Almighty for direction, and praise him for success.

The duty which Paul enjoins — "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance," — would be the surest means to augment our love to God. We gradually cease to love a benefactor of whom we cease to think. The

frequent recollection would warm our affections, and we should more cordially devote our lives to him to whom we should more frequently consecrate our hearts. The Apostle therefore inculcates prayer, not only as an act, but as a frame of mind.

In all his writings effectual prayer uniformly supposes accompanying and preparatory virtues. Prayer draws all the Christian graces into its focus. It draws Charity, followed by her lovely train, of forbearance with faults, forgiveness of injuries, pity for errors, and relieving of wants. It draws Repentance, with her holy sorrows, her pious resolutions, her self-distrust. It attracts Faith, with her elevated eye — Hope, with her grasped anchor — Beneficence, with her open hand — Zeal, looking far and wide to serve — Humility, with introverted eye, looking at home. Prayer, by quickening these graces in the heart, warms them into life, fits them for service, and dismisses each to its appropriate practice. Prayer is mental virtue; virtue is spiritual action. The mould into which genuine prayer casts the soul is not effaced by the suspension of the act, but retains some touches of the impression till the act is repeated.

Prayer, divested of the love of God, will obtain nothing, because it asks nothing cordially. It is only the interior sentiment that gives life and spirit to devotion. To those who possess this, prayer is not only a support but a solace:

to those who want it, it is not only an insipid task but a religious penalty. Our Apostle every where shows that purity of heart, resignation of spirit, peace and joy in believing, can, by no other expedient, be maintained in life, activity, and vigour. Prayer so circumstanced is the appointed means for drawing down the blessing we solicit, and the pardon we need.

Yet that the best things are liable to abuse is a complaint echoed by all writers of ethics. Certain mystics, pretending to extraordinary illumination, have converted this holy exercise into a presumptuous error. Intense meditation itself has been turned into an instrument of spiritual pride, and led the mistaken recluse to overlook the appointed means of instruction; to reject the Scriptures, to abandon the service of the sanctuary, and to expect to be snatched, like holy Paul, up to the third heaven, deserting those prescribed and legitimate methods which would more surely have conducted him thither. The history of the Apostle himself presents a striking lesson in this case. "Let us remember," says one of the fathers, "that though Paul was miraculously converted by an immediate vision from heaven, he was nevertheless sent for baptism and instruction to a man."

Holy Paul calls upon us to meditate on the multitude and the magnitude of the gifts of God. When we consider how profusely he bestows, and how little he requires; that while he confers

like Deity, he desires only such poor returns as can be made by indigent, mendicant mortality; that he requires no costly oblation; nothing that will impoverish, but, on the contrary, will inconceivably enrich the giver. — When we consider this, we are ready to wonder that he will accept so poor a thing as impotent gratitude for immeasurable bounty. When we reflect, that our very desire to praise him is his gift — that his grace must purify the offering, before he condescends to receive it, must confer on it that spirit which renders it acceptable — that he only expects we should consecrate to Him what we have received from Him, — that we should only confess, that of all we enjoy, nothing is our due — we may well blush at our insensibility.

We think, perhaps, as we have observed in another place, had he commanded us "to do some great thing," to raise some monument of splendour, some memorial of notoriety and ostentation, something that would perpetuate our own name with his goodness, we should gladly have done it. How much more when He only requires

Our thanks how due!

When he only asks the homage of the heart, the expression of our dependence, the recognition of his right!

Concerning the duty of intercessory prayer for those we love, the Apostle has bequeathed us a high and holy example. He has given us not only injunctions but specimens. Observe for what it is that "he bows his knees to God" in behalf of his friends. Is it for an increase of their wealth, their power, their fame, or any other external prosperity? — No: it is, that "God would grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man;" — it is, that "Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith;" — it is, "that they may be rooted and grounded in love," and this to a glorious end — "that they may be able, with all Saints, to comprehend" the vast dimensions of the love of Christ; — that "they may be filled with all the fulness of God." These are the sort of petitions which we need never hesitate to present. These are requests which we may rest assured are always agreeable to the Divine will; here we are certain we cannot "pray amiss." These are intercessions of which the benefit may be felt, when wealth, and fame, and power, shall be forgotten things.

Why does Saint Paul "pray day and night, that he might see the face of his Thessalonian converts?" Not merely that he might have the gratification of once more beholding those he loved — though that would sensibly delight so affectionate a heart — but "that he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith."

Here is an instance of a spirit so large in its affections, so high in their object; of a man who had so much of heaven in his friendships, so much of soul in his attachments, that he thought time too brief, earth too scanty, worldly blessings too low, to enter deeply into his petitions for those to whom time and earth, the transitory blessings of life, and life itself, would so soon be no more.

In exciting us to perpetual gratitude, Saint Paul stirs us up to the duty of keeping before our eyes the mercies which so peremptorily demand it. These mercies succeed each other so rapidly, or rather, are crowded upon us so simultaneously, that if we do not count them as they are received, and record them as they are enjoyed, their very multitude, which ought to penetrate the heart more deeply, will cause them to slip out of the memory.

The Apostle acknowledges the gratitude due to God to arise from his being the universal proprietor, — *whose I am, and whom I serve;* thus making the obedience to grow out of the dependence. He serves his Maker because he is his property. We should reflect on the superiority of the bounties of our heavenly Father, over those of our earthly friends, not only in their number and quality, but especially in their unremitting constancy. The dearest friends only think of us occasionally, nor can we be so unreasonable as to expect to be the constant object

of their attention. If they assist us under the immediate pressure of distress, their cares are afterwards remitted.

Many, besides us, have a claim upon their kindness, and they could not invariably attend to us without being unjust to others. If a man were to lay out his whole stock of affection upon one individual, how many duties must he neglect, how many claims must he slight, how much injustice must he commit, of how much ingratitude would he be guilty! And as an earthly friend cannot divide his benefits, or even the common acts of kindness, among an indefinite number, and as human means have limits, so his benevolence can generally be little more than good will. But the exhaustless fund of infinite love can never be diminished; — though the distribution is universal, though the diffusion is as wide as his rational creation, though the continuance is as durable as his own eternity, the beneficence of almighty power needs not, like his creatures, deduct from one, because it is liberal to another.

Our kindest friend may not always know our secret sorrows, and, with the utmost goodness of intention, cannot apply a balsam, where he does not know there is a wound; or it may be a wound deeper than human skill can reach, or human kindness cure. Again, our weaknesses may often weary, and sometimes disgust even an attached friend, but it is the feeling of these very

infirmities with which our divine High Priest is so tenderly touched. His compassion arises from a deep and intimate sense of sympathy — for he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet in no point did he sin.

It is in this view that we become so personally interested in the attributes of God; that they come in so completely in aid of our necessities, and to the supply of our comforts. As his omniscience brings him fully acquainted with all our wants, and his omnipotence enables him to relieve them; so his immortality is pledged for ours, and insures to us the perpetuity of our blessings. What a glorious idea, that the attributes of the self-dependent and everlasting God are laid out in the service of his children!

But the Apostle, not contented with the double injunction, — *pray evermore; in every thing give thanks*, — links to it a most exhilarating duty — *rejoice evermore*. The single exhortation — *rejoice in the Lord* — is not sufficient, it is reiterated without limit, *again I say rejoice!* But what are the chief causes of Paul's joy? — "that God hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," — "that he hath delivered us from the powers of darkness," — "that he hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," — "that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." What is "his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" — that he should meet his

converts in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

But this blessed saint found surprising subjects of joy, subjects with which a stranger does not desire to intermeddle. *To rejoice in tribulation; to take joyfully the spoiling of his goods; to rejoice in the sufferings of his friends; to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.* This is, indeed, a species of joy which the world does not desire to take from him, nor to share with him. In the close of the description of his way of life, of which temptation, and trial, and sorrow, and sufferings, are the gradations, the climax is commonly not merely resignation but triumph; not submission only, but joy.

It is worth our observation, that by perseverance in prayer he was enabled to glory in the infirmity, "the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan given to buffet him," which he had thrice besought the Lord might depart from him; and it is a most impressive part of his character, that he never gloried in "those visions and revelations of the Lord," but in the infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, for Christ's sake, which were graciously sent to counteract any elation of heart which such extraordinary distinctions might have occasioned. Like his blessed Lord, he disclosed all the circumstances of his degradation to the eye of the world, and concealed only those of his glory.

The same spirit of Christian generosity which directed his petitions, influenced also his thanksgivings for his friends. What are the subjects for which he praises God on their behalf? — not that they are enriched or exalted, but that "their faith groweth exceedingly." Again, to the Philippians, "holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

But the Apostle endeavours most especially to kindle our grateful joy for the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; a blessing which, though thrown open to the acceptance of all on the offered terms, is to every believer distinctly personal. He endeavours to excite our praises for every instance of faith and holiness recorded in Scripture. He teaches us, that whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our instruction. The humble believer may claim his share — for in this case appropriation is not monopoly — of every doctrine, of every precept, of every promise, of every example. The Christian may exultingly say, the Holy Scriptures were written for *my* reproof, for *my* correction, for *my* instruction in righteousness. The Holy Spirit, who teaches me to apply it to myself, dictated it for *me*. Not a miracle upon record, not an instance of trust in the Almighty, not a pattern of obedience to God, not a gratulation of David, not a prophecy of Isaiah, not an office of Christ, not a doctrine of an Evangelist,

not an exhortation of an Apostle, not a consolation of St. Paul, but has its immediate application to *my* wants; but makes a distinct call upon *my* gratitude; but furnishes a personal demand upon *my* responsibility. The whole record of the sacred Canon is but a record of the special mercies of God to me, and of his promises to myself, and to every individual Christian, to the end of the world.

That Divine Spirit which dictated the inspired Volume has taken care that we should never be at a loss for materials for devotion. Not a prophet or apostle but has more or less contributed to the sacred fund, but has cast his mite into the treasury. The writings of Saint Paul, especially, are rich in petitions, abundant in thanksgivings, overflowing in praises. The Psalms of David have enlarged the medium of intercourse between earth and heaven. They have supplied to all ages materials for Christian worship, under every supposable circumstance of human life. They have facilitated the means of negotiation for the penitent, and of gratitude for the pardoned. They have provided confession for the contrite, consolation for the broken-hearted, invitation to the weary, and rest for the heavy laden. They have furnished petitions for the needy, praise for the grateful, and adoration for all. However indigent in himself, no one can complain of want, who has access to such a magazine of intellectual and spiritual treasure.

These variously-gifted compositions, not only kindle the devoutest feelings, but suggest the aptest expressions: they invest the sublimest meanings with the noblest eloquence. They have taught the tongue of the stammerer to speak plainly; they have furnished him who was ready to perish for lack of knowledge with principles as well as feelings; they have provided the illiterate with the form, and the devout with the spirit of prayer. To him who previously felt not his wants, they have imparted fervent desires; they have inspired the faint with energy, and the naturally dead with spiritual life.

The writings and the practice of Saint Paul do not less abundantly, than the compositions of David, manifest the supreme power of fervent devotion. The whole tenor of his life proves that his heart was habitually engaged in intercourse with the Father of spirits. His conversation, like the face of Moses, betrays, by its brightness, that he had familiar admission to the presence of God. He exhibits the noblest instance, with which the world has presented us, of this peculiar effect of vital religion; — that supplication is the dialect of the poor in spirit, thanksgiving the idiom of the genuine Christian, praise his vernacular tongue.

CHAP. XX.

SAINT PAUL AN EXAMPLE TO FAMILIAR LIFE.

THE highest state of moral goodness is compounded of the avowed properties of ripened habits, growing out of genuine Christian principles, invigorated and confirmed by the energy of the Holy Spirit: — this is evangelical virtue.

Saint Paul contrasts the power of opposite habits with wonderful force in his two pictures, one of the debasing slavery of a vicious mind, and the other of the almost mechanical power of superinduced good habits in a virtuous one: — "*Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*" * What a dominion must holy principles and holy habits have obtained in that mind, when he could say, "*The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,*" — "*I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me!*" Mere morality never rose to this

* Romans, vi.

superhuman triumph, never exhibited such a proof of its own power to establish Christian practice. To these rooted habits the sacred writers sometimes apply the term *perfection.*

Saint Paul, when he speaks of perfection, could only mean that fixedness of principle, and Christian elevation of character, which, under the influence of Divine grace, is actually attainable: he could not mean to intimate that he expected man to be freed from liability to error, to be completely exempted from the inroads of passion, to be no longer obnoxious to deviations and deflections from the law, by which he is yet mainly guided and governed. He could not expect him to be entirely and absolutely delivered from the infirmities of his frail and fallen nature. But though this general uniformity of good habits may occasionally, through the surprises of passion and the assaults of temptation, be in some degree broken, yet these invaders are not encouraged, but repelled: though some actions may be more imperfect, and some wrong tempers may still unhappily intrude themselves, yet vigilance and prayer obtain such a power of resistance, as finally almost to subdue these corruptions; and those that are not altogether conquered, but occasionally break out, induce a habit of watchfulness over the suspected places, and keep the heart humble, by a feeling of these remains of infirmity.

But even here, such are the stratagems of the

human heart for concealing its corruptions, not only from others, but from itself, that it is incumbent on every individual so to examine, as clearly to discover, his own real character; to inquire, whether he is at the same time sincerely mourning over his remaining disorders, and earnestly desiring and diligently cultivating a new vital principle of faith and holiness; or whether he has only been making a certain degree of improvement in this or that particular quality, while he continues both destitute and undesirous of this vital principle, which is the first seed of the Divine life.

It should seem, that the term "perfect," as well in other parts of Scripture as in the writings of Saint Paul, not only has not always the exact meaning which we assign to it, but has different meanings, according to the occasion on which it is employed. Sometimes this term expresses the aim rather than the acquisition, as in that injunction of our Saviour, — "Be ye perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Sometimes it appears to imply, being furnished with needful instruction in all points, as in Saint Paul's direction to Timothy, — "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Often it means nearly the same with religious sincerity, as in Proverbs, — "for the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it." Sometimes it is used with a special reference to

abhorrence of idolatry, as when the expression "perfect heart" is applied to various kings of Judah. The meaning in Philippians, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded," seems to import only real earnestness. Perfection, in the precise notion of it, admits not of gradation, nor of advancement in the same quality.

The highest kind of perfection of which man is capable is to "love God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, with all his heart;" that is, so to love as to obey the laws of the one, while he rests on the merits of the other. Saint Paul intimates that our happiness consists in the pardon of our sins, and our holiness in our conquest over them; and perhaps there is not a more dangerous delusion, than to separate the forgiveness from the subjugation: the pardon, indeed, is absolute, the conquest comparative. He places attainable perfection in the obedience of faith, in the labours of charity, in the purity of holiness; proving, that to aspire after this perfection all men, according to their respective advantages, are under equal obligation; and it is not too much to assert, that no one lives up to the dignity of man who does not habitually aspire to the perfection of a Christian. For to come as near to God, that is, as near to perfection, as our nature was intended to approach, is but to answer the end for which we were sent into the world. And do we not defeat that end,

while we are not only contented to live so much below our acknowledged standard, but while we rest satisfied without even aspiring towards it?

While Saint Paul strenuously endeavours to abate confidence, and beat down presumption, he is equally careful, not, by lowering the tone of perfection, to foster negligence, or to cherish indolence. He speaks as one who knew that sloth is an enemy, the more dangerous for being insidiously quiet. It saps the principle as effectually, if not as expeditiously, as other vices storm it. It is, indeed, in the power of this one inert sin to perform the worst work of all the active ones — to destroy the soul. He admonishes us equally, by his writings and by his example, to carry all the liveliness of our feelings, and all the vigour of our faculties, into our religion. He knew that a cold indifference, that a lifeless profession, would ill prepare us for that vital world, that real land of *the living*, that immortality which is all life, and soul, and spirit. He therefore prescribes for us as patients who need to be stimulated, full as often as to be lowered, in our moral temperature; nay, whose *general* constitution of mind presents a large portion of languor to be invigorated, and of lethargy to be animated. "A physician," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "would have small employment on the Riphæan mountains, if he could cure nothing but calentures; — dead palsies and consumptions are *their* diseases."

The Apostle, however, intimates frequently that perfection does not consist in a high heroic elevation in some particular point, which, as few could reach, so fewer would aim at it; but in a steady principle, an equable piety, a consistent practice, an unremitting progress. If the standard held up were singular, it would be unprofitable. An exhibition of character rather to be wondered at, than imitated, would be a useless perfection. A prodigy is not a model. It would be no duty to copy a miracle, but presumptuous to expect that a miracle would be wrought for us. To call on *all* to "perfect holiness in the fear of God" — to exhort men to "go on unto perfection," would be mocking human infirmity, if the Apostle meant something which only a very few could attain. "Pressing on unto perfection" can mean little more than a perpetual improvement in piety and virtue.

Let us, then, be animated and encouraged by Scripture instances of excellence, instead of being deterred by them, as if they were too sublime for our imitation, as if exalted piety were to be limited to a few peculiar favourites of Heaven, were the exclusive prerogative of some distinguished servants of God, the rare effect of some miraculous gift. All grace is indeed a miracle, but it is not a singular, it is not an exclusive miracle. Whole churches, with exceptions no doubt, have been favoured with it. Saint Paul speaks of large communi-

ties, not universally, we presume, but generally, touched by Divine grace, so as collectively to become "the joy and crown of his rejoicing." Hear him declare of his Roman converts, that they "were full of all goodness — filled with all knowledge;" of the Corinthians — that they "were enriched in every thing" — that they "abounded in all *faith and diligence:*" mark the connection of these two attributes, "faith" in one, nor in another, is not the slackener of duty, but in *all* the principle and spring of the same "diligence." These high commendations are not limited to Apollos, his associate in the ministry, nor to "Timothy, his dearly beloved son;" nor to Titus, his "own son after the common faith," nor to any other of those distinguished saints "who laboured with him in the gospel."

We may therefore fairly consider Saint Paul not as an instructor nor as a model exclusively for martyrs, and ministers, and missionaries. As the instruction of Christ's sermon on the mount, though primarily addressed to his disciples, was by no means restricted to them, so the exhortations of Paul are not confined to ecclesiastical teachers, though he had them much in view. The inclosure lies open to all; the entrance is left free; the possibility of salvation is universal; the invitation is as large as the benevolence of God, the persons invited as numerous as his whole rational creation.

It is a beautiful part of his character, and it is what contributes to make him so uniformly a pattern, that all his strength is not reserved for, nor expended entirely on, those great demands which so frequently occurred, to answer which he was always so fully prepared, and which he encountered with such unshaken fortitude.

His intervals were filled up with shades of the same colour; the same principle was at work in all the common events of his daily life; the same dispositions which were ripening him for his final suffering, operated in the humble, tender, forbearing habits, in which he was perpetually exercised. The divine principle had resolved itself into a settled frame of mind. And it was in the hourly cultivation of that most amiable branch of it, Christian charity, that he acquired such maturity in the heroic virtue of enduring patience. To deny his own inclinations, to sustain the infirmities of the weak, to bear the burden of others, he considered as indispensable in the followers of *Him* whose lovely characteristic it was that HE PLEASED NOT HIMSELF. In enjoining this temper on his Roman converts, he winds up his injunction, with ascribing to the Almighty the two attributes which render Him the fountain of grace, for the production of this very temper in all alike who call upon Him for it. He denominates Him *the God of patience and consolation.*

We must not therefore fancy that this emi-

nent Saint was not an example to private life, because his destination was higher, and his trials greater than ours. This superiority cannot disqualify him for a copy. We must aim at the highest point. It is easier to reduce a portrait than to enlarge it. All *may* have the same grace, and some actually *have* great, if not equal trials. If Christians are not now called, like him, to martyrdom, they are frequently called to bear the long protracted sufferings of sickness without mitigation, of penury without relief, of sorrows without redress; some are called to bear them all without even the comfort of witnesses, without the soothings of pity.

If the elevation of his conduct does not place this great Apostle above our imitation, no more does the sublimity of his principles, as we find them exhibited in his writings. His piety in both is equally of a practical nature. We rise from perusing many a treatise of metaphysical morality without clearly ascertaining its precise object; at least without carrying away any one specific principle for the regulation of our own heart and life. We admire the ingenuity of the work as we admire the contrivance of a labyrinth; it is curiously devised, but its intricacy, while it has amused, has embarrassed us: we feel that we might have made our way, and attained our end, more easily and more speedily, in a plain path, where less perplexity required no artificial clue. The direct morality of our Apostle has none of this *Dædalian enginery*.

Saint Paul, in one sense, always writes like a man of the actual world. His is not a religion of theory, but of facts, of feelings, of principles; a religion exactly accommodated to the being for whom he prescribes. Our passions and our reason, our hopes and our fears, our infirmities and our supports, our lapse and our restoration, all find their place in his discussions. He consults every part of our nature; he writes for material and immaterial, for mortal and immortal man.

He does not abound in those desultory and random discussions which distract the mind, and leave the reader at a loss what he is to think and what he is to do. He does not philosophise upon abstract truths, nor reason upon conjectural notions; but bears witness to what he has seen and known, and deduces practical instruction from actual events. He is therefore distinct in his exposition of doctrines and duties; explicit in his injunctions and reproofs; and this because truth is absolute. We can scarcely peruse a sentence in his writings, without finding something to bring away from them for our own use, something which belongs to ourselves, something which would have been seasonably addressed to us, had he been our personal correspondent.

He knew mankind too well not to know the necessity of speaking out; he knew that if any opening was left, they would interpret it in their own favour, that they would slip out of every

thing which was not precisely explained, and definitely enjoined. He was aware that the reason why men profit so little by Scripture instruction is, because, in applying it, they are disposed to think only of other people, and are apt to forget themselves. He knew it was not easy to lower the world's good opinion of itself. That the quicksightedness of certain persons errs, not in misunderstanding the justness of a reproof, but only in mistaking its object, and that by directing the censure to others, they turn away the point of the weapon from their own bosoms. Yet he makes charitable allowance for the capacities, the exigencies, and the temptations of a world so diversely circumstanced. Like his blessed Master he would have all men every where to be saved; and, like him, left no means unessayed which might promote this great end.

We must not imagine that Christianity is not precisely the same thing now as it was when our Apostle published it, because its external marks are not so completely identified. A more animated zeal in religion might have been visible and legitimate in the first ages of the Church than commonly in the present. The astonishing change then effected in the minds of men was rapid, and often instantaneous. In our day it is usually gradual. It is no wonder that persons should have been overwhelmed with joy and gratitude at being suddenly rescued from the darkness of Pagan idolatry, at being delivered from the bondage of the Jewish

ritual, and translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God. This total revolution in the mind and in the principles would certainly produce a sensible alteration in the external habits and visible practice of the Gentile convert; whose morals, if he were indeed a convert, would be as different from what they had previously been, as his faith, and he as different from his former self, as any two men from each other. This, consequently, would make the change more obvious than in the renovated character of a nominal Christian, now brought to embrace vital Christianity; in whose outward observances, antecedent and subsequent to his change, there might possibly be no *very* apparent alteration.

In the days of the Apostle, the holy sacrament of baptism was likely to be in the very highest sense of the word expressive of regeneration. It was not only the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; but it was also, for the most part, an actual evidence that such grace had been effectually received unto eternal salvation. The convert then was an adult, and received baptism as his explicit confession, and open adoption of the new faith. To bring men "to believe with the heart, and to confess with the tongue," the divinity of the Redeemer was to bring them to be truly converted. "No man could say that Jesus was the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." As the

apostles had neither reputation to influence, nor authority to compel, nor riches to bribe, so it is obvious that there was nothing to attract men to Christianity except their full conviction of its divine truth. It was hostile to their secular advancement, to their interests, their reputation, their safety. Hypocrisy was consequently a rare when it was a losing sin. A hypocrite was not likely to embrace a faith by which he was sure to gain nothing in this world, if it were false, and nothing till after his death, if it were true. Christians were such optionally, or not at all.

It was not then probable that he who was baptized under such circumstances would be merely an external convert. According to all human means of judging, that "faith" existed, which is said by an article to be "confirmed" in baptism; and this holy sacrament became not only an initiatory but a confirmatory rite.

There were at that time no hereditary professors, there was no such thing as Christianity by transmission. There was, therefore, a broad line to step over whenever the new faith was adopted. There was no gradual introduction into it by education, no slipping into it by habit, no wearing its badge by fashion.

But if the novelty attending the early introduction to Christianity has ceased; if living in a land where it is universally professed, being educated in some acquaintance with the Christian faith, finding easy access into the temples

in which it is preached, habitually attending on its services, living under laws which are imbued with its spirit: if all this takes off from the apparent effect, if it lessens the surprise, if it moderates the joy and wonder, which a total change in external circumstances was calculated to excite; if it even lessens in a degree the *visible* alteration produced in hearts awakened by it; if this change was more obvious in the conversion of those who were before wallowing in the grossest abominations, or sunk in the most degrading superstitions, than in those who are conversant with the decencies of life, who had previously observed the forms of religion, and practised many of the social virtues; yet in the views and in the feelings, in the heart and in the spirit, in the principle of the mind, and in the motive of the conduct, the change in the one case has a very near affinity to the change in the other. The difference of circumstances diminishes nothing of the real power of Divine grace; it does not alter the nature of the change inwardly effected; it does not manifest now less than it did then, the "pitifulness of God's great mercy in delivering those who are tied and bound with the chain of their sins."

Had Saint Paul been a profligate or immoral man, we apprehend that his conversion would, as an example, have lost much of its power. The two extremes of character might in that case, indeed, more forcibly strike the superficial

enquirer. But to show the turpitude of gross vice a miracle is not necessary; Christianity is not necessary. The thing was self-evident; Antoninus and Epictetus could have shown it. But for a man who had previously such strong claims to respect from others, such pretensions on which to value himself,—his Hebrew descent, — his early initiation into the distinguishing Jewish rite,—his Pharisaic exactness, an exactness not hypocritical but conscientious, — his unquestionable morals,—his blameless righteousness in all that pertained to the law,—his correctness of demeanor,—his strict observance of religious forms;—that *such* a man should need the further subjugation of his passions, his pride, his bigotry, and uncharitableness; that, in short, *he* should require a total and radical renovation of the character and the soul, — this was indeed a wonder worthy of Divine inspiration to declare, as well as of Divine grace to accomplish; and this change, when really effected, afforded an appeal for the truth of the doctrine, both to the heart and to the understanding, more powerful than volumes of arguments. Thus, Saint Paul's whole life, from his conversion to his death, presents one unbroken series of the most conclusive evidences of the truth of Christianity.

Saint Paul was aware that there is frequently more danger where there is less scandal; that some fancy they are reformed, because they have exchanged the sensual for the spiritual vices;

that in truth men oftener change their sins than their nature, put pride into their correctness, and violence into their zeal, and uncharitableness into their sobriety, and covetousness into their prudence, and censoriousness into their abstinence. Among the better disposed, he knew there were many who, after they are brought to embrace religion, think they have nothing more to do. But is it nothing to do daily to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil? These persons were, perhaps, sincere in their enquiries, and their convictions were strong. But having once obtained a confidence in their acceptance, they conclude that all is well. They live upon their capital, if we may be allowed the expression; and so depend upon their assurance, as if their personal work was done. To both of these classes he directs the warning voice, *Go on unto perfection;* to both he virtually represents that if the transformation were real, it would animate them to increased earnestness; while their desires would be more fervent, their piety would not evaporate in desires, their constant fear of relaxing would quicken their progress.

It is worth remarking, that throughout the Holy Scriptures, and especially throughout the writings of the Apostle — *striving with principalities and powers, putting on the whole armour of God, continuing instant in prayer, seeking those things which are above, mortifying your members,*

avoiding inordinate affections and covetousness, which is idolatry, are not applied to the profane, or even to the careless, but to those who had made a great proficiency in religion; not to novices, but to saints. These are continually cautioned against sitting down at ease in their religious possessions; they are exhorted, on the contrary, to augment them. It is not, as an able writer says, "longing after great discoveries, nor after great tastes of the love of God, nor longing to be in heaven, nor longing to die, that are such distinguishing marks of a perfect Christian, as longing after a more holy heart, and living a more holy life." *

The Apostle shows that we must not sit down satisfied even in the habitual *desire*, even in the general *tendency* to what is right. He frequently stirs up the reader to actual exercise, to quickening exertions; without such movements he knew that desire might sink into unproductive wishes, that good tendencies might come short of their aim. This brief but comprehensive hint — *not as though I had already attained* — frequently recollected and acted upon, will serve to keep up in the mind that we are capable of much higher things than we have yet achieved — and that while we are diligently ascending by each progressive step, we must still stretch forward our view to the culminating point.

* Dr. Owen on the Holy Spirit.

If, then, even the most conspicuous converts of Saint Paul required to be confirmed by incessant admonition; if he did not think the most heroic Christians so established as to be arrived at their ultimate state; if he did not think the most advanced so secure as to be trusted to go alone, so complete in themselves as to lose sight of their dependence; if *they* required to be exhorted *to go on unto perfection — to be renewed from day to day — to stand fast — to quit themselves like men — to be strong in the Lord*, and in the power of his might *to stand against the wiles of the devil, and having done all, to stand* — "let us not be high-minded, but fear." If we believe that the spirit was poured out in more abundant measures in the incipient state than on us in the more established position of the Church; yet we see their superiority in this respect neither lessened the necessity of caution in the instructor, nor of diligence in the hearer.

CHAP. XXI.

ON THE SUPERIOR ADVANTAGES OF THE PRESENT PERIOD FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF KNOWLEDGE, RELIGION, AND HAPPINESS.

We have heard of a royal infidel, who was impious enough to declare, that had the Maker of the universe consulted him at the Creation, he could have given him hints for the improvement of his plan. Many, who do not go so far as to regret that their advice was not asked when the world was made, practically intimate that they could improve upon the scheme of Providence in carrying it on. We have met with persons, who, not fully satisfied with the evidences of Christianity, at least not quite firm in the practical adoption of its truths, have expressed a wish, that for the more complete confirmation of their faith, their lot had been cast in this or in that particular age, in which they might have cleared up their doubts, and removed their difficulties.

Now, though it is not permitted to indulge any wish contrary to the appointment of Him who fixes the bounds of our habitation, and ordains our whole lot in life; yet it should seem

that we, in this age and country, have the most abundant reason not only to be contented with our allotment, but to be peculiarly grateful that it has fallen at this precise period. Who, that reflects at all, will maintain, that any era in the history of the world, whether antecedent or subsequent to the institution of Christianity, could have afforded clearer lights or higher aids than the present? or would have conduced to make us wiser, better, or happier?—Let us be assured, that if we do not see truth with sufficient distinctness, it is not our own position, nor that of the object, which is in fault, but the organ itself.

It is not to our present purpose to insist on the internal evidence of Christianity: on that witness within, — that conviction of the Christian's own mind, arguing so strongly the truth of Revelation from its correspondence to his own wants, — because this is an evidence equally accessible to the believer of every period. We shall, therefore, only offer a few observations on the superior advantages which we at present enjoy, as well from other causes as from the fulness of the external evidence which has been undeniably established upon the profoundest knowledge and closest examination of the Sacred Records, by so many of our wisest and soundest divines.

We have, for our assistance in religious knowledge, the collective wisdom of sacred an-

tiquity; and for our furtherance in piety, its precepts, its monitions, its examples. It is also the peculiar honour of our Apostle, that from his life and writings *alone* a new confirmation of the truth of the Gospel which he preached has been recently and completely made out. In addition to the fullest general evidence of the authenticity of the New Testament, two of our own contemporaries, — men of different rank, habits, education, and turn of mind, — have extracted from the writings of Saint Paul *exclusively* particular and collateral evidence of a most interesting and important nature. We refer, in the first instance, to a small but valuable work of a noble author *, himself a convert of no common order, in which he lays down, and substantially proves the truth of the position, that *the conversion and apostleship of Saint Paul alone, duly considered, is, of itself, a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a Divine Revelation.* Into these circumstances, which it is probable powerfully assisted his own convictions, he has with great diligence examined; and has with irresistible strength proposed them for the conviction of others.

In the other instances, we refer to that exquisite work, the "Horæ Paulinæ," of Doctor Paley; a work which exhibits a species of evidence as original as it is incontrovertible. It is

* Lord Lyttelton.

a corroboration of the truth of the New Testament, derived from the incidental but close correspondence of numberless passages in the life and travels of Saint Paul, related in the Acts, with his own repeated reference, in his Epistles, to the same circumstances, persons, places, and events; together with their most correct geographical agreement; — the respective authors of both writings uniformly and consistently, though unintentionally, throwing light on each other.

This interesting work, in a more especial manner, adds weight to facts which were already fully established, and strength to that "truth" which was before "barred up with ribs of iron." We cannot too highly estimate this subsidiary evidence to the Christian Revelation, derived, as it were, casually and incidentally, from our Apostle, from him to whom we were already unspeakably indebted for so much direct spiritual and practical instruction. It is a species of evidence so ingenious, yet so solid, so clear, and so decisive, that the author must have carried his point in any court of judicature before which the cause might have been brought.

If it were not the very genius of Scepticism to shrink its "shrivelled essence" down to the minutest point, when it wishes to work itself an entrance where no visible opening seemed previously to have been left, we should think that,

after the able defences of Revelation which have been made on general grounds, the addition of these partial and subordinate, but not less convincing, proofs, had not left even the smallest crevice through which Unbelief could force, or even Doubt insinuate, its way.

But to quit this more limited channel of conviction for the broad current of general Scripture, let us examine what period would have been more favourable, not only for the confirmation of our belief, but for our moral, our intellectual, and spiritual improvement. Let us institute an enquiry (if a few cursory and superficial remarks may be so called), whether all those whose supposed superior opportunities of religious improvement we are disposed to envy really possessed more advantages than ourselves; and whether many among them were induced, in consequence of their peculiar situation, to make the best use of those which they actually did possess.

How very few of those who were not only countrymen but contemporaries of our blessed Redeemer believed in him, or at least persevered in their belief! Even of his immediate disciples, even of his select friends, of the favoured few who beheld the beautiful consistency of his daily life, who were more intimately privileged to hear the gracious words which proceeded from his lips — we pass by the Son of Perdition — one had not courage so much as

to acknowledge that he knew him; another doubted his identity after his resurrection. In the moment of exquisite distress, *they all forsook him*. His "own familiar friends" abandoned him, "and of the people there was none with him."

Where then were the peculiar, the enviable advantages of that situation, placed in which, the fervent Peter, who declared that though all men should forsake him yet would not he;—the fervent Peter forgot his oath, and forfeited his fidelity? Can we affirm that we have stronger or more tender religious attachments than "the disciple whom Jesus loved?" Yet was he one of that *all* who forsook him. Are we sure that it is a superiority in our faith rather than in our circumstances which makes us to differ from those affectionate but troubled companions, who, after his crucifixion, sunk into the most hopeless despondency?—"We *trusted* that this should have been He who should have redeemed Israel." Cannot we, on the contrary, exultingly say, We *know* that this was He who has redeemed, not Israel only, but every penitent believer, of every people, and kindred, and nation, to the end of the world?

After the truth of our Lord's divine mission had been ratified by his resurrection from the dead, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, how many who heard the preaching, and beheld the miracles of his apostles, remained hardened in

incredulity! In the ages immediately succeeding the promulgation of the Gospel, even while its verities were new, and the sense of its blessings fresh, many of its professors fell into gross errors; some tainted its purity by infusions of their own; others incorporated with it the corruptions of Paganism. Many became heretics, some became adversaries, not a few renounced Christianity, and more, perhaps, dishonoured it.

Does not Saint Paul, after his incessant labours, even after his apparent success in one quarter of the globe, sorrowfully exclaim to his friend, "Thou knowest that *all* they which are in Asia be turned away from me?" He then proceeds to enumerate individuals, of whom it may be presumed that he once entertained better hopes. While, therefore, we possess the works of this great Apostle, and still many continue to receive so little benefit from them, let not any deceive themselves with the notion, that they would have derived infallible sanctification from his personal preaching; but let them remember, that all proconsular Asia*, who enjoyed that blessing, deserted both him and the Gospel. May not even the advantage, considered in some points of view, be reckoned on our side? If we may trust his own humble report of himself, "his letters," he says, "were allowed to be more weighty and powerful than his bodily presence."

If so many were perverted, who had the pri-

* 2 Timothy, i.

vilege of standing the nearest to the fountain of light, who even drank immediately from the living spring itself, shall we look for a more luminous exhibition, or more privileged exercise, or more sincere "obedience" of Christian "faith," in the middle ages, when, in truth, religion was in a good measure extinguished, when the Christian world had sunk into almost primeval darkness; "when Christianity," to borrow the words of Melancthon, "was become a mere compound of philosophy and superstition;" when what religion did survive was confined to a few, was immured in cloisters, was exhausted in quibbles, was wasted in unprofitable subtleties, was exhibited with little speculative clearness, and less practical influence?

Even when literature and religion awoke together from their long slumber, when deteriorated Christianity was renovated and purified, the glorious beams of the Reformation did not diffuse universal illumination. Even by better disposed, but partially enlightened minds, contention was too frequently mistaken for piety, and debate substituted for devotion.

Of how different a spirit from these wrangling polemics was Saint Paul! Though he repeatedly exhorts his friends, especially Timothy, in instructing his people to watch particularly "over their docrine," the grand foundation on which all preaching must be built, yet he ever shows himself an enemy to controversy, to

frivolous disputes, and idle contention. He directs his converts not to waste the time and strenth, which should be reserved for great occasions, *about words to no profit but subverting the hearers.* And, perhaps, there has seldom been less genuine piety in the church than when intricate and theoretical points in theology have been most pertinaciously discussed. This is not "contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," but diverting the attention from faith, and alienating the heart from charity.

We do not mean to censure a spirit of enquiry, nor to repress earnestness in the solution of difficulties. It is, indeed, of the very essence of an enquiring mind freely to start doubts, as it is of a learned and enlightened age rationally to solve them. On this point, we are quite of the opinion of a good old divine, that "nothing is so certain as that which is certain after doubts." But compared even with the latter period of religious light and information, how far superior is our own! We who have the happiness to live in the present age, live when truth has had time to force its way through all the obstructions which barred up its passage to the heart; to pierce through all the obscurities which had been raised about it, to prevent its access to the understanding.

If we rightly appreciate our advantages, we shall truly find that no country, in any age, was ever placed in a fairer position for improvement

in wisdom, in piety, in happiness. A black cloud, indeed, charged with sulphureous matter, for a long time was suspended over our heads; but, providentially directed, it passed on, and bursting, spread conflagration over other lands. By the most exact retributive justice, those very countries in which the modern Titans first assaulted heaven became the first scene of total desolation. — In other places we have seen experiments tried, new in their nature, terrible in their progress, and worse than fruitless in their results. We have seen a great nation endeavouring to show the world that they could do without God. We have seen them exclude the Maker from his own creation! and to complete the opposition between their own government, and His whom they gloried in dethroning, they used their impiously assumed power for the extermination of the species which he had created, for the destruction of the souls whom he had sent his Son to redeem.

If, however, in our own age, and perhaps in our own country, Christianity has not only been boldly opposed, but audaciously vilified, it has been only so much the more seriously examined, so much the more vigorously defended. If its truth has been questioned by some, and denied by others, it has been only the more carefully sifted, the more satisfactorily cleared. The clouds in which sophistry had sought to envelope it are dispersed; the charges which scepticism

had brought against it are repelled. The facts, arch-like, have been strengthened by being trampled upon. Infidelity has done its worst, and by the energy of its efforts, and the failure of its attempts, has shown how little it could do. Wit, and ingenuity, and argument, have contributed each its quota to confirm the truths which wit, and ingenuity, and argument, had undertaken to subvert. Talents on the wrong side have elicited superior talents on the right, and the champions of the Gospel have beaten its assailants with their own weapons. Pyrrhonism has been beneficial, for by propagating its doubts it has caused them to be obviated. Even Atheism itself has not been without its uses, for by obtruding its impieties, it has brought defeat on the objections, and abhorrence on their abettors. Thus the enemies of our faith have done service to our cause, for they have not advanced a single charge against it which has not been followed by complete refutation: the shaking of the torch of truth has caused it to diffuse a clearer and stronger light.

Let us once more resume the comparison of our advantages, and the use we make of them, with the advantages and the conduct of those ancient servants of God, in considering whom, perhaps, we mingle envy with our admiration. How fervently did these saints of the Old Testament pant for that full blaze of light under which we live, and for which we are so little

thankful! — "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" — was the heart-felt apostrophe of a devout patriarch. The aged Saint who "waited for the consolation of Israel, and rapturously sung his *Nunc dimittis*," — the ancient Prophetess, who departed not from the temple, who desisted not from prayer day nor night; — the father of the Baptist, who "blessed the Lord God of Israel that he had visited and redeemed his people*;" — how small were their advantages compared with ours! How weak is our faith, how freezing our gratitude, compared with theirs! † — They only beheld in their Saviour a feeble infant; — they had not heard, as we have heard, from the most undeniable authority, the perfections of his life, nor the miracles of his power, nor the works of his mercy, nor his triumph over death, nor his ascension into heaven, nor the descent of the Comforter. They had not witnessed a large portion of the globe brought within the Christian pale, by the preaching of that Gospel, the dawn of which so exhilarated their overflowing hearts. If full beatitude is promised to them who have not seen and yet have believed, what will be the state of those who virtually *have* seen and yet have not believed?

Had any patriarch or saint, who was permitted only some rare and transient glimpses of

* Luke, i. † Luke, ii.

the promised blessing, been allowed, in prophetic vision, to penetrate through the long vista of ages, which lay in remote futurity before him — had he been asked, if his power concurred with his choice, in what age and in what nation he would have wished his lot assigned him — is it not more than probable that he would have replied — IN GREAT BRITAIN, IN THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY!

May we not venture to assert, that there are at this moment, on the whole, more helps and fewer hinderances to the operation of Christian piety than at any preceding period? May we not assert, that at no time has the genuine religion of the Gospel been more precisely defined, more completely stript of human inventions, more purified from philosophical infusions on one hand, and on the other more cleared from superstitious perversions, fanatical intemperance, and debasing associations? That there still exist among us philosophists and fanatics, not a few, we are far from denying; but neither is the distortion of faith in the one party nor its subversion in the other the prevailing character; good sense and right-mindedness predominate in our general views of Christianity.

If it be objected that there is a very powerful aid wanting to the confirmation of *our* faith, which the age of the apostles presented — that of miraculous gifts — the obvious answer is, that

if they have ceased, it is because they have fully answered the end for which they were conferred; and is not the withdrawing of these extraordinary endowments more than compensated by the fulfilment of so many of the prophecies of the New Testament, and the anticipation of the near approach of others, yet unaccomplished? In the mean time, have we not the perpetual attestation of those living miracles, the unaltered state of the Jewish Church, and the frequent internal renovation of the human heart?

There is not a more striking feature in the character of the Royal Psalmist than the fervent and reiterated expressions of his love and admiration of the Holy Scriptures. In what a variety of rapturous strains does he pour out the overflowings of his ardent soul! — "Oh, how I love thy law! — Thy word is a lamp to my feet — Oh, teach me thy statutes! Thy words have I hid within my heart — Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law!" — To give a full view of his affectionate effusions, would be to transcribe the larger portion of the Psalms. To paraphrase his words, would be to dilute essential spirit.

Let us pause a moment, and while we admire this holy fervency, let us blush at our own ingratitude for advantages so superior; let us lament our own want of spiritual sensibility. Let us be humbled at the reflection, how very small was the portion of Scriptures with which David

was acquainted! How comparatively little did he know of that Divine book; yet what holy transport was kindled by that little! He knew scarcely more than the Pentateuch, and one or two contemporary prophets. Then let us turn our eyes to the full revelation under which we live, and be grateful for the meridian splendour.

Had David seen, as we see, the predictions of the later prophetical writers, those of Isaiah especially, to say nothing of his own, fulfilled — had he seen, as we have seen, their glorious accomplishment in the New Testament — the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, the plenary gift of the Holy Spirit, the fulfilment of types, the substantiation of shadows, the solution of figures, the destruction of Jerusalem, the wide propagation of the everlasting Gospel, and that in far more tongues than were heard on the day of Pentecost — had he seen a Bible in every cottage — a little seminary of Christian institution in every village — had he beheld the firm establishment of the Christian Church, no longer opposed but supported by secular powers, after having conquered opposition by weapons purely spiritual — had he seen a standing ministry continued in a regular succession from the age of the apostles to the present hour — had he seen, in addition to these *domestic* blessings, England emancipating Africa and evangelizing India, commerce spreading her sails to promote civil-

isation, and Christianity elevating civilisation and sanctifying commerce — had the Royal Saint witnessed this combination of mercies in one single country, what had his feelings been?

He who so passionately exclaimed, "Oh, how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! — my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord — blessed are they that dwell in thine house — one day in thy courts is better than a thousand — one thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple" — this conqueror of the heathen, this denouncer of false gods, this chosen monarch of the chosen people, this fervent lover of the devotions of the Sanctuary, this hallowed poet of Sion, this noble contributor to *our* public worship, this man after God's own heart, was not permitted to build one single church — we, in England alone, possess ten thousand.

But some may say, the apostles had supernatural supports, which are withheld from us. Their supports were doubtless proportioned to the fervency of their faith, and to the extraordinary emergencies on which they were called out to act. But as we had occasion to remark in a former chapter, these assistances seem to be reserved for occasions to which we are not called; and to be dispensed to them for others rather than for themselves. We do not find that

they who could cure diseases were exempt from suffering them; that they who could raise others from the dead escaped a violent death themselves. We do not find that the aids afforded them were given to extinguish their natural feelings, to lighten their burdens, to reue them from the vicissitudes of a painful life, from poverty or sorrow, from calumny or disgrace. Though Saint Paul converted the Philippian gaoler, he had nevertheless been his prisoner; though he had been the instrument of making "saints even in Cæsar's household," he was not delivered from perishing by Cæsar's sword.

It does not appear that in their ordinary transactions they had the assistance of more than the ordinary operations of the Spirit. These, blessed be Almighty Goodness! are not limited to prophets or apostles, but promised to all sincere believers to the end of the world; communicated in a measure proportioned to their faith, and accommodated to their exigencies. The treasures of grace, unlike all other treasures, are not to be exhausted by using; but like the multiplication of the loaves, more is left to be gathered up after the gift is used than was imparted in the first instance.

CHAP. XXII.

CONCLUSION. — CURSORY ENQUIRY INTO SOME OF THE CAUSES WHICH IMPEDE GENERAL IMPROVEMENT.

If we, in this favoured country, and at this favoured period, are not as internally happy as we are outwardly prosperous; if we do not reach that elevation in piety, if we do not exhibit that consistency of character, which, from the advantages of our position might be expected; if innumerable providential distinctions are conferred without being proportionally improved; if we are rejoicing for public blessings without so profiting by them, as to make advancement in private virtue and personal religion; — should we not diligently enquire in what particulars our deficiencies chiefly consist, what are the obstructions which especially impede our progress? And will a short digression, with a view to this enquiry, be considered as too wide a departure from the general subject?

That middle course which the lukewarm Christian takes, he takes partly because it seems to carry with it many present advantages which the geniune Christian loses. This measured conduct obtains for him that general

popularity, the desire of which is his main spring of action. He secures the friendship of worldly men because he can accommodate his taste to their conversation, and bend his views to their practices. As he is not profligate, the pious, who are naturally candid, judge him favourably, and entertain hopes of his becoming all they wish; so that he unites the credit of their good opinion with the pleasure derived from the society of the others. A neutral character thus converts every thing to his own profit, avoids the suspicion attached to saints, and the disgrace inseparable from sinners. To disoblige the world is, upon his principles, a price almost too high for the purchase of heaven itself. Is it not doubtful whether he who accounts it so easy a matter to be a Christian *is* a Christian in reality? To such an one, indeed, it is as easy as it is pleasant, to reckon upon heaven; but can any, without faith and without patience, be followers of them who, "through faith and patience, inherit the promises?"

The truth is, mere men of the world do not conceive a very formidable opinion of the real evil of sin; they think slightly of it, because it is so common; they even think almost favourably, at least they think charitably of it, when they see that even good men are not altogether exempt from it. From carelessness, or an erroneous kindness, they entertain a tender opinion of what they perceive to be a constant attendant

on human nature; they plead in its vindication the mercy of God, the weakness of man, the power of temptation, the strength of the passions; and are apt to construe a strict judgment on the thing into an uncharitable harshness on the man. For this forbearance they expect to be paid in kind, to be paid with interest; for their very charity is usurious. The least religious, however, often resent keenly those crimes which offend against society; of sins which affect their own interest they are the most forward to seek legal redress. But they do not feel that some of the worst corruptions are of a spiritual nature; and to those which only offend God, they never show themselves tenderly alive.

But if they were brought to entertain just notions of the glorious majesty of God, they would soon learn to see how sin dishonours it; nor could an adequate view of his unspeakable holiness fail of leading them to a thorough hatred of every thing which is in direct opposition to it. If, however, their own impure vision prevents them from perceiving how deeply sin must offend the infinite purity of God, they might at least be awfully convinced of its malignant nature, by contemplating the wide and lasting ravages it has made among the human race. That can be no inconsiderable evil which has been perpetuating itself, and entailing misery on its perpetrators for nearly six thousand years.

Many are too much disposed to confound a confident feeling of security with religious peace. Conscience, whose suggestions were, perhaps, once clamorous, may, from long neglect, have become gradually less and less audible. The more obtuse the feelings grow, the less disturbance they give. This moral deadness assumes the name of tranquillity, and, as Galgacus said of the Roman conquerors, in his noble speech on the Grampian hills, "when they have laid all waste, they call the desolation Peace."

Is there not a growing appearance that many are substituting for the integrity of Christian doctrine as taught in the Gospel, a religion compounded chiefly of the purer elements of deism, amalgamated with some of the more popular attributes of Christianity? If the Apostle, after all his high attainments, was "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified," shall a deteriorated, or, as it is pleased to call itself, a liberal Christianity, lead its votaries to be satisfied with knowing every thing except him; that is, to be satisfied without knowing him in such a manner, as at once to hallow him as a priest, to believe in him as a prophet, and to be ruled by him as a king; at once to obey him as a teacher, and trust in him as a Saviour?

On the other hand, let us remember that we may be correct in our creed, without possessing

a living faith; we may be right in our opinions, without any cordial concurrence of the heart, or any obedient subjugation of the will; we may be regular in the forms of devotion, and irregular in our passions. We may be temperate in what regards the animal appetites, and intemperate in the indulgence of evil tempers. We may be proud of our own orthodoxy, while we ridicule a serious spirit in another professor of the same opinions. We may maintain a customary habit of prayer, while we are destitute of that spirit without which prayer is unavailable. May not some pray without invoking the mediation of the great Intercessor? May he not say to some now, as he said to his disciples, *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name.* We do not mean so invoking him as to round the closing period with his name, but so regarding him, as to make him the general medium of our intercourse with heaven.

And is it not an increasing evil, that there seems to prevail among some a habit, so to speak, of generalising religion, of melting down the peculiar principles of Christianity, till its grand truths are blended in the fusion, and come out of the crucible without any distinctive character? A fundamental doctrine of our religion is, with many, grown not only into disuse but discredit. But unless a man can seriously say that his natural powers are fully effectual for his practical duties; that he is uniformly

able of himself to pursue the right which he approves, and to avoid the wrong which he condemns; and to surmount the evil which he laments, and to resist the temptations which he feels; it should seem that he ought in reason to be deeply thankful for that divine aid which the Gospel promises, and on which St. Paul descants with such perpetual emphasis; that he ought gladly to implore its communication by the means prescribed by this great Apostle.

If a man does not set up on his own strength; if he cannot live upon his own resources; if he finds that his good intentions are often frustrated, his firmest purposes forgotten, his best resolutions broken; if he feels that he cannot change his own heart; if he believes that there is a real spiritual assistance offered, and that the communication of this aid is promised to fervent prayer; it should seem to follow, as a necessary consequence, that this interior sentiment would lower his opinion of himself, change his notions of the Divine character, diminish his feeling of self-dependence, loosen his attachment to sense, make him more indifferent to human opinion, and more solicitous for the favour of God. This humbling, yet elevating intercourse with heaven would seem to convince him feelingly, that of himself he can do no nothing, that human estimation can confer no intrinsic value, because it cannot make us what we are not; and that we *are* in reality only what we are in the sight of God.

There is another cause which hurts the interests of religion. Injurious names are reciprocally given to the most imperious duties; parties take different sides, and match them each against the other, as if they were opposite interests. But no power of *words* can alter the nature of *things*. Good works are not Popery; nor is faith Methodism. Yet, is not a spiritual litigation vigorously carried on between two principles, both of which are of the very essence of the Gospel, and bound up therein in the most intimate and indissoluble union? Let us not reject a truth because it is misrepresented by those who do not understand it. We know that a learned Bishop was condemned by an ignorant Pope for propagating no worse a heresy than that there were Antipodes.

Many, again, desire to be religious, but suffer the desire to die away without any effort to substantiate it; without any cordial adoption of the means which might produce the effect. Yet, with this inoperative desire, the languid Christian quiets conscience, and is satisfied with referring to this unproductive wish as an evidence of his sincerity. — The effect is similar to that of a deceitful anodyne which lulls pain without removing its cause. There are those who may be said to swallow religion as something which they are told it is their duty to *take* in order to do them good. They therefore receive it in the lump, and then dismiss it from their thoughts

as a thing done. It is no wonder if the success is proportioned to the measure. But would the Apostle have so strenuously insisted on the necessity of being "*renewed from day to day*," if there were any *definite* day in which it could be affirmed that the work had been accomplished? And can any thing short of such accomplishment justify us in desisting to press forward after it?

If then we would embrace Christianity as a life-giving principle, we must examine it analytically, we must resolve it into the several parts of which it is compounded, instead of considering it as a nostrum, the effect of which is to be produced by our ignorance of the ingredients of which it is made up. To subscribe articles of faith without knowing what consequences they involve — to be satisfied with having them propounded, without entering into the spirit of our obligation to obey them — to acknowledge their truth, without examining our own interest in them, is not only to be an imperfect but an irrational Christian.

While the political and moral improvement of the world around us seems, in many respects, to be consentaneously advancing, let not *us*, of this highly distinguished land, frustrate the grand objects which we have been the honoured instruments of establishing. Britain presents a spectacle, on which, if the world gazes with an admiring, it will gaze also with a scrutinising eye. Those whom we have served and

saved will jealously enquire — for the obliged are not the least prying — whether we live up to the high tone we assume? — whether we obey the Gospel we extol? — whether we are religious in person or by proxy? — whether all who disperse the Scriptures read them? — May not the critical observer be inclined to parody the interrogatories of our Apostle to the censorious Jews *: — Thou that sayest another should not swear, art thou guilty of profane levity? — Thou that sayest a man should keep the sixth and seventh commandments, dost thou shrink from duelling and libertinism? — Thou, who holdest out a fair example in attending the solemnities of the Sunday morning's worship, dost thou attend likewise the unhallowed festivities of the evening? — Thou that art valiant in the field, art thou also "valiant for the truth?" — Thou who, professing "pure religion and undefiled," visitest the fatherless and widow with thy purse, dost thou keep thyself "unspotted from the world?" — Let it be observed that these are hypothetical questions, not rash accusations.

The public munificence and private bounties of this age and country have outgone all example. An almost boundless benevolence has annihilated all distinction of religion and of party, of country and of colour; no difference of

* Romans, ii. 21.

opinion, no contrariety of feeling has checked its astonishing operation, has chilled its ardent flame. No object is too vast for its grasp, none is too minute for its attention. The moral energies of the country have kept pace with the military and political. Charity, too, has been intimately connected with religion, and we may hope it is to the growth of the latter principle, that we are to ascribe the former practical effect.

It remains with us to give substantial proof that the right practice has flowed from the true principle. Let us never give occasion to the members of another church to infer that even Protestants are not practically averse from the purchase of *indulgences*. Let us not give them the slightest cause for imputing to any of our acts of beneficence a spirit of commutation. Let them not see that sobriety, purity, and self-control, are considered by any of us as minor statutes in the Christian code; let it not be said that personal holiness is laid asleep by the soothing blandishments of liberal profession; by the misapplied tenderness of candid construction; by a toleration which justifies the doing much that is not right ourselves, because we make large allowances for whatever is wrong in others. To judge charitably is a Christian precept; but religion no more permits us to judge falsely than to act censurably. To the affluent it is cheaper, and to the inconsiderate it is easier, to relieve others than to deny themselves. Let

them remember, however, that though to give liberally is nobly right, yet to act consistently is indispensably requisite, if we would make that which is in itself right acceptable to God; and let even the most benevolent never fail to reflect, that nothing *can* swell the tide of charity to its full flow but self-denial.

If some among us were to make their public bounties the measure of their domestic conduct it would be setting up for themselves a high practical standard; yet it might be fair to make it so. Such liberal persons might do well to consider how far, in every subscription they pay, they do not give a sort of public pledge of their general practice; and how far, in order to be honest, they are not bound to redeem the deposit by their general correctness. Is it not a species of deceit to appear better than we are? And do we not virtually practise this deceit when our self-government is obviously not of a piece with our liberality?

Do we then undervalue charity? God forbid. Charity is a grace so peculiarly Christian, that it is said to have been practised in those countries only where Revelation has been enjoyed either by possession or tradition. Of the historians of ancient times who have transmitted to us the fame of their military skill, their political glory, their literary talents, their public spirit, or domestic virtues, none have made any mention of their charitable institutions; — none

have made any mention of a great nation receiving into its bosom, in the moment of imminent danger, of foreign war, and pressing domestic distress, myriads of exiles from the enemy's country; — of their receiving and supporting thousands upon thousands of the priesthood of a religion so hostile to their own as scarcely to allow them to believe that there was salvation for their benefactors.

Benevolence is the most lovely associate of the other Christian virtues. We mistake only when we adopt her as their substitute. Excellence in this grand article is so far from procuring a dispensation from the other graces of piety, that she only raises the demand for their loftier exercise. In the Christian race, however, the fleeter virtue must not slacken her speed lest her competitors should be distanced. No; the lagging attributes must quicken theirs.

We trust that we have not, in any part of this little work, attempted to degrade human reason. Is it degrading any quality or faculty to assign to it its proper place, to ascribe to it its precise value? Reason and religion accord as completely in practice as in principle; and is it not a subject of gratitude to God, that as there is nothing in Christian belief, so there is nothing in Christian practice, but what is consonant to views purely rational. Every disorder, irregularity, and excess, which religion prohibits, is as contrary to our comfort, health, and happi-

ness here, as it is fatal to our eternal interests, and should be equally avoided on the ground of natural and spiritual judgment.—Nay, if Christians are accused by the infidel of selfish motives, in obeying God for their own interest, is there not more absurdity in disobeying Him, when, by so doing, we forfeit every thing which a well-directed self-love would show to be our highest advantage, and which common sense, human prudence, worldly wisdom, would teach us to pursue.

Saint Paul combats all those partialities of judgment which arise from the understanding submitting itself to the will, from conviction yielding to inclination. As it was the truth of the principle, the rectitude of the act, which determined his judgment, so we read him to little purpose, if the same qualities do not also determine ours. But men submit to unexamined predilections; they do not allow themselves to be convinced of any thing with which they are not first pleased. Practical errors are rarely adopted from conviction, but almost always from inclination.

Our Apostle frequently includes "lovers of their ownselves" in his catalogue of grievous offenders. He considers selfishness as a state of mind inconsistent with Christianity. No other religion, indeed, had ever shown that it was sinful; no other had ever taught its followers to resist it; no other had furnished arms

against it, had enabled its disciples to conquer it. Yet may we not venture to assert, that among the prominent faults of this our age is a growing selfishness:—we mean not that sullen selfishness which used to display itself in penurious habits, in shabby parsimony, and a sordid frugality; which received part of its punishment in the self-inflicted severities of its votary, and part in the discredit and contempt which attended it. But we mean that luxurious selfishness which has its own gratification in the vanity it indulges; and its own reward in the envy which it secretly awakens, in the admiration which it openly excites.

The tide of an increased and increasing dissipation, gorgeous, costly, and voluptuous beyond all precedent, has swept away the mounds and ramparts within which prudence in expense, and sobriety in manners, had heretofore confined it. Strange! that fashion and custom, and the example of others, are brought forward as a vindication by beings who know they must be themselves individually responsible for the errors and the sins into which they are plunged by imitation, as well as by original evil. *Numbers* are pleaded as a valid apology for being carried headlong down the torrent. But have we ever heard that the plague was thought a slighter distemper from the greatness of the numbers infected? On the contrary, is not the extent of the ravage its most alarming symptom? And is not the weekly diminution in the num-

bers publicly registered as the only signal of returning health?

God has blessed the late unparalleled exertions of this country with a proportionate success. Honour and glory crown our land. But honour and glory are not primary stars, they borrow their lustre from that immortal principle which is the fountain of all moral illumination. — Let us bear in mind, that to be prosperous without piety, or joyful without gratitude, or thankful without repentance, or penitent without amendment, is to forfeit the favour of HIM from whom all prosperity is derived. — We are told in the oracles of God, that the corruptions of an irreligious nation converted blessings into sins, when "pride and abundance of idleness" were the ungrateful returns for "fulness of bread."

Though we no longer perceive that open alienation from God, so apparent in the commencement of the French Revolution, yet do we perceive that return to Him which the restoration of our prosperity demands? Has the design of the Almighty, in visiting us with the calamities of a protracted war, been answered by a renunciation of the sins for which it was sent? Has his goodness, in putting a happy period to these calamities, been practically acknowledged? — acknowledged, not merely by the public recognition of a wisely appointed day, but by a visible reformation of our habits and manners?

We are now most imperatively called upon to give unequivocal proof that our devotion in the late twenty years' succession of national fasts had some meaning in it beyond the bare compliance with authority, beyond the mere impulse of terror. Let it not be inferred, from any apparent slackness of principle, that ours was the prayer of nature for relief, more than of grace for pardon; the cry for escape from danger, rather than for deliverance from sin.

As God has abundantly granted us all the temporal blessings for which we then solicited, let us give full proof that our petitions were spiritual as well as political; as He, in pity, has withdrawn the anger of his chastisements, let us, in gratitude, take away the provocation of our offences. He has long tried us with corrections; he is now trying us with mercies. If, as we are told, when his judgments are in the earth, we should learn righteousness, what should we *not* learn, what should we *not* practise, when blessings are accumulated upon us — blessings, more multiplied in their number, more ample in their extent, more valuable in their nature, more fraught with present advantages, more calculated for our eternal good, than ever were experienced by our ancestors in any period of our history?

Let us not triumphantly compare ourselves with worse nations, unless we knew what use they would have made of mercies which we have neglected; let us not glory in our supe-

riority to countries who have had to plead a bad government and a worse religion. To be better than those who are bad is a low superiority now, and will not be admitted as a reason for our acquittal hereafter. Corrupt Tyre, profligate Zidon, whose extinction the prophet Ezekiel had predicted in the most portentous menaces, were pronounced by *Infinite Compassion* to be far less criminal than the *instructed* people to whom the pathetic admonition was addressed. If blindness and ignorance might be offered as a plea for those heathen cities, what should extenuate the guilt of the enlightened regions of Galilee?

It was on the most solemn of all occasions, that of a description of the general resurrection, that St. Paul breaks in on his own awful discussion, to suggest the "corruption of manners" inseparable from "evil communications." Does it not give an alarming idea of his serious view of the subject, that he should so intimately connect it with the immediate concerns of the eternal world? Can we safely separate a cause and a consequence which he has so indissolubly joined?

As the joy felt by the patriarchal family in the ark, when the bird of Peace, with its symbol in her mouth, returned to this little remnant of an annihilated world — such, in its kind, was the joy experienced when the voice of the charmer was recently heard on our shores, and throughout an almost desolated quarter of the

globe. But let not our own country forget that this peace, so fervently desired, and so graciously accorded, may, by our neglecting to improve the blessings, become more fatally and irretrievably injurious than that state of hostility which we have so long and so justly deplored. Let us not forget that the shutting of the gates of the temple of Janus, by opening those of Paris, may only have changed the nature, while it has deteriorated the character, of the warfare.

What incantation is there in the name of Peace that could, as by the touch of a magician's wand, produce at once a total revolution in the character of a people, and in our opinion of them? What charm is there in a *sound* that could so transform a great nation, abandoned for a quarter of a century to boundless vice, and avowed infidelity, as to render familiar intercourse with them profitable, or their society even safe; which could instantaneously convert this scene of alarm into a scene of irresistible attraction — could cause at once this land of terror to be desired as impatiently, and sought as impetuously, as if it had been the Land of Promise?

Will the borrowed glory, or rather the stolen renown, arising from pilfered pictures, or plundered statues — will the splendour of public buildings, buildings cemented with the blood of millions — will all the works of art, however exquisite, atone for the degradation of the human

and it may be almost said, the extinction of the Christian character? Will marbles, and paintings, and edifices expiate the utter contempt of morality, with all the other still lingering effects of the legal abolition of Christianity and the public disavowal of God? Will the flower of England, the promising sons and blooming daughters of our nobles and our gentry, reap a measure of improvement from these exhibitions of genius which may be likely to compensate for the pernicious associations with which they may be accompanied?

Have we forgotten, that the mother of the fine arts, licentious Greece, injured Rome in her vital interests, her character, her honour, and her principles, more irretrievably than all her losses during her military conflict with them had done? — that this great people, the England of antiquity, never lost sight of her true grandeur, never sacrificed her superiority, but when she stooped to imitate the vices, to adopt the manners, and to import the philosophy of the vanquished enemy; and, in short, that Greece amply revenged herself on her conqueror by a contact, which communicated an inextinguishable moral contagion?

To revert to a remoter and a higher source,— did not the chosen people of God suffer more essentially in their most important interests, by their familiar communications, *after* their con-

quest, with the polluted Canaanites, than in their long and perilous warfare with them?

Let not these necessary enquiries be construed into the language of vulgar prejudice, be interpreted into the unchristian wish to perpetuate an unjustifiable aversion to a nation, because they have been our political enemies. We feel no desire, like the Carthaginian father, to entail our own hatred on our offspring, to make our posterity vow interminable hostility to a people, because their predecessors have suffered by them. We have no wish to persist in personal alienation from any country, especially from one, which Divine Providence has made our nearest neighbour. It would be equally weak and wicked.

But may we not venture, with all diffidence, to ask, should not there be a little space allowed them, after their deep pollution, to perform that quarantine, which even our ships are obliged to undergo before we receive them on our own shores? May we not further ask, in the present instance, if, by plunging into the infection on theirs, we do not fearfully aggravate their peril of the pestilence?

In these observations we are conscious of wandering into illimitable topics, — topics which may appear irrelevant to our general object. It is fit we should resume that object, and draw to a close.

Let us observe, for our own imitation, that

what Saint Paul might be called to do, or to suffer, in the intermediate stages to his final rest, he knew not, nor was he solicitous to know. Of one thing he was assured, that a day was coming when, whatever now appeared mysterious, would be made clear. While others only knew *Him* of whom they had *heard*, he knew *Him* in whom he *believed*. He desired no other ground of confidence. All those superior concerns, on which his heart was set, lay beyond the grave; lay in the hands of Him to whom he had trusted all which he accounted valuable. The soul which he had committed to his Saviour, he knew that this Saviour "was able to preserve against that day." Swallowed up in the grandeur of the thought, he disregards the common forms of speech, and leaves it to his friend to supply what was rather understood than expressed — *what day he meant.*

If it is astonishing that any should disbelieve a religion which has such unparalleled attestations to its truth, as the religion which Saint Paul preached, is it not far more astonishing that, professing not to have any doubt of its truth, any should continue to live as if they believed it to be false; that any should live without habitual reference *to that day*, to which his writings so repeatedly point, without labouring after a practical conviction of that paramount doctrine on which he so unweariedly descants, the benefits of the death of Christ?

This doctrine our apostle has, beyond all other writers, irrefragably proved to be the only argument of real efficacy against our own fear of death. All the reasonings of philosophy, all the motives drawn from natural religion, all the self-complacent retrospection of our own virtues, afford no substantial support against it. This great doctrine, as the apostle also repeatedly proves, supplies the only principle which can set us above the sorrows of life. Mere moral sentiment often raises us above the grosser corruptions of sense, but it does not raise us above the entanglements of the world; it does not lift us above perplexing fears and anxious solicitudes; it does not raise us above the agitations of desire; it does not rescue us from the doubts and harassings of an unsettled mind; it does not deliver us from the pangs of an awakened conscience. A mere moral taste may sustain character and support credit, but it does not produce present holiness, nor peace, nor a hope full of immortality. It communicates neither strength to obey, nor power to resist, nor a heart to love, nor a will to serve.

Let us then study, with holy Paul, that Gospel, wherein the true secret of happiness, as well as the great mystery of godliness, is revealed. Our Divine Teacher does not say *read*, but *search* the Scriptures. Its doctrines are of everlasting interest. All the great objects of history lose their value, as through the lapse of

time they recede farther from us; but those of the book of God are commensurate with the immortality of our nature. All existing circumstances, as they relate to this world merely, lose their importance as they lose their novelty; they even melt in air as they pass before us.

While we are discussing events they cease to be; while we are criticising customs they become obsolete; while we are adopting fashions they vanish; while we are condemning or defending parties they change sides; while we are contemplating feuds, opposing factions, or deploring revolutions, they are extinct. Of created things, mutability is their character at the best, brevity their duration at the longest. But "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." All that the heart craves, that word supplies. *This* state of things is all instability; the Gospel points "to a city which hath foundations." *Here* we have, beyond any other age or people, seen the kingdoms of this world transferred, depopulated, destroyed: *there* we are promised a kingdom which cannot be moved.

With holy Paul, then, let us take the Bible for the subject of our meditation, for the ground of our prayer, the rule of our conduct, the anchor of our hope, the standard of our faith. Let us seriously examine whether this faith is built on the same eternal basis with that of the apostle, whose character we have been contemplating;

whether we are endeavouring to erect upon it a superstructure of practical goodness worthy of the broad and sure foundation.

Let us close our frequent reference to Saint Paul as a pattern for general imitation, by repeating one question illustrative of those different qualities which ought to meet in every Christian. If the most zealous advocate for *spiritual influences* were to select, from all the writers of sacred antiquity, the most distinguished champion of his great cause, on whom would he fix his choice? And if the most strenuous assertor of the duty of *personal activity in moral virtue* were to choose from all mankind the man who most completely exemplified this character in himself, where must he search? Would not the two antagonists, when they met in the field of controversy, each in defence of his favourite tenet, find that they had fixed on the same man, — Paul the apostle of the Gentiles? If then we propose him as our model, let us not rest till something of the same combination be formed in ourselves.

To this end let us diligently study his epistles, in which the great doctrines of salvation are amply unfolded, and the mode of its attainment completely detailed. In contemplating the works of this great master of the human mind, we more than perceive, we *feel*, their applicableness to all times, places, circumstances, and persons; and this, not only because the Word of Eternal

Life is always the same, but because the human heart, which that Word reveals to itself, is still the same also. We behold, as in a mirror, the fidelity, we had almost said the identity, of his representation, — face answering to face. We feel that we are personally interested in every feature he delineates. He lets us into the secrets of our own bosoms. He discloses to us the motives of our own conduct. He touches the true springs of right and wrong, lays bare the moral quality of actions, brings every object to the true point of comparison with each other, and all to the genuine standard of the unerring Gospel. By him we are clearly taught that the same deed done from the desire of pleasing God, or the desire of popular favour, becomes as different in the eye of religion as any two actions in the eye of men.

There we shall see also that Saint Paul evinced the sincerity of his eternal hopes by constantly preparing himself for their fruition. These hopes shaped his conduct, these hopes moulded his spirit to a resemblance of the state he hoped for; and he best proved his belief that there really was such a state, by labouring to acquire the dispositions which might qualify him for its enjoyment. Without this aim, without this effort, without this perseverance, his faith would have been fruitless, his hope delusive, his profession hypocrisy, and his "preaching vain."

Let us image to ourselves the Saviour of the

world holding up professing Christians as a living exemplification of his religion; of that religion which he taught by his doctrines and ratified by his blood. Let us represent him to our imaginations as referring to the lives of his followers for the truth of his Word. Do we not tremble at such a responsibility? Do we not shrink from such a comparison? Are we not alarmed at the bare idea of bringing reproach on his Gospel, or dishonour on his name?

Christians! why would you wait till you arrive at heaven, before you contribute to the great end of every dispensation, — namely, *that God may be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe?* Even now, something of that assimilation should be taking place, which will be perfected when "we shall see Him as He is," and which will never take place if the resemblance begin not here. Beatification is only the finishing of the likeness. Intuition will only complete the transformation.

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